Every Week ILLUSTRATED June 23, 1923

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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Seed of Cain

By Maude Reynolds

Chelsea House

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CHELSEA HOUSE

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Love Story Magazine

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

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By VICTOR THORNE

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Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith gives you for this issue "Mrs. Witherby's Secret"—a strange tale of a more strange woman.

"The Substitute Bride," by Madeleine Buchanan, is the story of a girl who, as the result of her courage and sympathy, finds herself in bridal finery substituting at the altar for her own sister!

Cynthia de Vinnie is represented by "Lady of the Locket."

Two fine serials, "Seed of Cain" and "Love and a Lie," continue. "An Old Love's Shackles" concludes.

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

Vol. XII June 23, 1923 No. 4

Seed of Cain

by Maude Reynolds

CHAPTER I.

THE sudden passing of old mad Craddock of Thatch caused a terrible stir in Thatch End. It marked the end of an era. For the life of the village had, for generations past, revolved round the House of Thatch and the doings of the members thereof.

The squire had lived alone in utmost isolation. The gardener and the housekeeper, the only two servants to be kept on, had fetched everything necessary from the village, and for close on thirty years not a soul had been up to the house. This was old mad Craddock's strict order, and folk knew better than to disobey it.

Old mad Craddock had long been the object of speculation and imagining.

And yet there was no definite sign of madness about him. He read, he ate, he walked alone in his park and among his meadows, such as were not rented out to farmers, watching them spoil for lack of an active hand. Then he came back and buried himself in his books again.

Many were the conjectures in the countryside as to the happenings that had turned his mind. At the sign of "The Craddock Arms" in Thatch End, there had been many a heated dispute of a winter's night, when the chairs had been pulled up to each side of the fire, the red curtains tightly drawn, the pewter mugs on the table and the room full of smoke.

Some said one thing, others said another. Some remembered the hanging of Robert Craddock, his father, and the

shameful gloom that the thing had cast over the House of Thatch, and certain strange possibilities were whispered, and lost in the smoke. But few hit upon the truth, and thirty years passed before it was revealed. Then it was to a comparative stranger—and left untold by him.

Richard Craddock was only in his teens when he came into the estate, but whether it was the shadow over his young life, or because he was of a bookish turn and a very different stamp from his pleasure-loving father, there was no more entertaining at Thatch. Even after he married, the Craddocks kept to themselves and were seldom seen about. Mrs. Richard had died young, leaving behind her a baby girl, who was given the name of Lucia by her father, who ceased to interest him, because she was not a boy.

It was soon after his wife's death that something happened to envelop Richard Craddock in mystery to the end of his days. The facts of the tale, so far as it was known according to the gossips, were that one day, nearly thirty years ago, the master of Thatch had come home looking as though he had been dragged through a pond, soaking wet and with a terrible look in his eyes.

Directly he was inside the house, he began giving orders. The first order was—that baby Lucia should be taken away at once by her nurses to her mother's folk, never to return till she should be sent for. With this wild edict came a muttering that it was "no fit house for a child," that she should have her "chance" away from her father.

With the next breath, he had dismissed all the servants, outside and in, and they had gone, trembling; all save the housekeeper, Mrs. Jenkins, who was made of sterner stuff and stood her ground with arms akimbo.

"Here I be and here I stay till I'm carried out in my coffin. My mother and her mother before her served Craddocks of Thatch, and 'tain't likely I'd leave the last of them with nary soul to look to him, be he never so mad!" Mrs. Jenkins had said.

So, as all the shouting in the world could not move her, the master got tired of it and let her stay. The same happened with one of the gardeners, who was so deaf that he only nodded pleasantly and went on with his digging when his master yelled at him to leave the place.

One other incident had made food for gossip three or four years back. Old mad Craddock had returned one day from his morning walk with a bundle under his arm, and in the bundle was a live baby girl. He had called Mrs. Jenkins, and told her to give it some milk and warm it by the fire. "'Tis some gypsy child; I found it crying underneath a hedge!" was all the explanation he vouchsafed.

"But what are we going to do with it?" she asked, in some perplexity.

The question irritated him. "Do with it, woman?" he had thundered. "Why, give it houseroom and a little kindness, since it has found none of its own people! Then it will not go back whence it came, saying it found this world too cold and callous a place to live in. I have enough sins on my soul without adding another!"

This last gave Mrs. Jenkins not a little to think. The baby annoyed her at first, she thinking it disgraceful that her master should have denied his own child and now give houseroom to a "common gypsy's brat," but later, as the baby grew and entwined itself round her heart-strings, her attitude changed.

The child thrived with all the hardihood of an outdoor race, woke the echoes of the empty house with gurgles of glee, toddled unsteadily but unafraid between the kitchen and the library, and melted the ice about Richard Craddock's heart.

He had called her Brenda—"an

unique name, which ought to fit you well, little one, for none will ever know who you are or where you came from," he said, and taught her to call him "gran'pa," as soon as she could lisp it.

So Brenda lived and loved, and made sunshine in her world, of which the three pillars were two old men, one they called mad and the other deaf, and one old woman, and the three were all equally beloved in her baby heart.

And it became her habit to bring her little mug of bread and milk, and eat her breakfast sitting beside the master, babbling joyfully the while. When bedtime came, her chubby little arms were clasped tightly round the old man's neck, and, often as not, he would carry her himself up to her little cot in the housekeeper's room.

So, when the sands of Richard Craddock's life ran low, sleepy little Thatch woke up one afternoon to the unaccustomed sight of the old deaf gardener hobbling down the village street toward the doctor's house, as fast as his rheumatic old legs could carry him.

His pace was so unwonted that several heads were thrust out of door and window to ask him what was the matter.

"Where be the doctor?" he gasped breathlessly. "He be wanted up to the house! Master, he's ailin', and he's askin' for the doctor!"

This was indeed enough to set the heads bobbing and the tongues wagging, and one or two ran out willingly before him to see if the doctor was in. So it was that Doctor Jim opened his dispensary door to find half a dozen excited people, all eager to tell him that "old mad Craddock lay ailin' at last" and had need of him.

It was useless to ask for particulars or symptoms, so he guessed heart and put the necessary things in his bag, slung the bag on his bicycle and rode off, leaving an interested little crowd behind him.

Doctor Jim had to ride past the great gates of Thatch, now nailed shut and overgrown with vines; gates that had always been so hospitably wide open in the last squire's day, and on up the road to a small gate in the wall, now used only by the two servants, on their errands of necessity to and from the village.

Fortunately, the gardener, in his precipitancy, had left it standing open, so Doctor Jim wheeled his bicycle through, and found himself in the wilderness that had once been a well-kept park.

Following the little footpath, he presently made out chimneys above a distant group of trees, so he determined to make for the main drive, which should be between him and the gates he had passed on the road. He walked his bicycle across the meadow for some way and found himself on a curve of the drive, now scarcely distinguishable from the field, so matted was it with grass and weeds. He mounted and struggled on through the fast-rising autumn mist that was already deepening into twilight.

He came at last upon the house, round a sudden bend that skirted a cluster of

Brenda, with her gurgles of glee, melted the ice about old Richard Craddock's heart.

trees. The big house frowned down at him, gloomy and forbidding; most of the windows were shuttered, and some of them were nearly hidden by ivy and Virginia creeper.

Feeling for a bell in the usual place, he found it in a tangle of vines and pulled it rustily with all his force. The bell, which had not been heard for thirty years, clanged and reverberated noisily through the house, wakening echoes long dead. The man waited, listening to the distant clanging and looking round him at the abomination of desolation.

Presently he heard a footstep in some passage far off, the opening of doors, then nearer, the grating of a key in a lock, the drawing of rusty bolts in the front door itself. The white face of Mrs. Jenkins, whom he knew by sight, peered round at him.

"If you'll please to lend a hand, sir, it's a bit stiff for want o' use." The doctor used his weight against the door and stood inside.

"I'm that glad ye've come, doctor. I've been afeared he'd have another attack afore ye got here!"

"What sort of an attack, and when did he have it?"

"Well, sir, he fainted dead off after breakfast this morning, leastways, he hadn't had no breakfast to speak of, he bein' off his feed for some days back, an' I was that put to it to bring him to himself agen, and then I had to run and call Jake—that's the gardener, sir—to help me lift him up into his chair." Mrs. Jenkins paused for breath, but Doctor Jim kept questioning.

"When did he ask for me?"

"I suggested it this morning, sir. He looked like death, that he did, after he come to! But he wouldn't hear of it then. Said as how he knew he was dyin', and he'd as lief die in peace without any 'fool leech' around—beggin' your pardon, sir, I'm sure!"

"And—— Go on, how has he been since?"

"Well, sir, he's hardly moved his position all day, jest sittin' there, a-starin' in front of him. Even the baby couldn' get nothin' out of him, and she climbed on his knee and went to sleep there, bless her little heart! Well, this afternoon I thought I heard him groaning, so in I ran, and sure enough, there he was with his hand on his heart and the sweat in beads on his forehead. An' he turned to me an' he says huskylike, 'Jenkins,' says he, 'my hour has come! What manner of man is that doctor down in the village?' So I tells him, sir, how clever you are, and how they all loves you——"

Doctor Jim cut her short. "And so you sent for me. Quite right, Mrs. Jenkins, I had better see him at once!"

"If you'll wait here, sir, I'll tell him. I dursn't take you in without!"

She bustled away, leaving the doctor alone in the big shadowy hall, with a candle to help out the fading light that filtered through shuttered windows. He held it high above his head and looked around him.

He saw in the corners, suits of armor, rusty, empty, ghostly, like silent sentinels keeping an age-long watch. He saw the gallery that ran round the top of the hall, now dusty and cobwebbed, and thought of the days when it had echoed to the feet of pretty women and gallant gentlemen, laughing Craddock children, red-coated huntsmen, dancers whispering of love, and at times, as now, it told of sadder things.

He saw the portraits on the black-paneled walls around. There was one in particular which he recognized as that of old Robert Craddock, he who had hung for murder, the father of the present squire. He had seen its copy in the coffee room of the "Craddock Arms" in the village.

He moved up nearer and let the candlelight fall on the jolly old rubicund face, looking down unconcernedly from another world. True type of a genial,

fox-hunting, hard-drinking squire of a bygone day, those good old days before the Craddocks of Thatch had gone to pieces.

Robert Craddock had loved pleasure and insisted on it, not only for himself, but for all his villagers, and so it came about that the never-ending hospitality and entertaining up at the House spread itself to the village, and Thatch End became a byword in the county for its fairs, its games and dances, its cock fighting, wrestling bouts and other jollifications.

And then to end it all, Robert Craddock went and got himself mixed up in a duel, of all things. It was said that one insulted him, but whatever the rights of the matter, the finish of it was this, that he hung for murder at the county jail. Mistress Craddock, she who had been the belle of the county and the reigning toast, had scarcely known a day's sorrow in her life. After the hanging her hair turned white in a single night, and she died shortly after of a broken heart. Her sorrow was reflected in the village, and by and by Thatch End went to sleep.

It was this man's son who now, in his turn, lay dying, an old man, the last of his race, and all alone.

"Will you please to come this way, sir?"

The doctor started out of his reverie, and followed the woman, their footsteps echoing noisily away into the shadowy spaces, up the stairs and along the gallery that ran round the top. It seemed to the man as they went down the passage, that the house was full of the footsteps they had left behind them in the hall.

Opening a door, the doctor saw a white-haired old man lying back in an armchair. The light of a flickering fire fell on his face, showing up that grim "shadow" that all doctors know too well.

Richard Craddock turned his head and studied the other man intently without a word. Then he motioned feebly to a chair. As Doctor Jim drew nearer, he noticed the baby girl that was cradeled in the old man's arms, fast asleep, with her rumpled curls against his breast and one chubby fat hand holding tight to his coat.

"I hope I shall be able to do you some good, sir; I can at least relieve the acute pain!" said the doctor, sitting down. "If Mrs. Jenkins will kindly bring me a light."

A gleam of annoyance came into Richard Craddock's eyes, eyes that burned and smoldered still under shaggy, white brows.

"It is long since a stranger took it upon himself to give orders in my house! I prefer the dusk, sir!"

"Your pardon, Mr. Craddock, but I really can't work in the dark, you know. I'll put it out again directly I've finished."

"Well, well, light some of the candles and then begone, woman! Here, take the child, but bring her back to say good night to me; she'll not have another chance!"

The doctor opened his bag and took out his stethoscope, but the invalid waved it away.

"I did not send for you, young man, to administer to my body, which is worn out and beyond all earthly aid. The end is near, thank God, and my worthless life is over. I sent for you to hear your opinion as a man of science on certain matters which are troubling me."

The doctor, recognizing certain unmistakable symptoms in the eyes and laborious breathing, shut up his bag, and drew his chair nearer, leaning forward with his chin on his hand to devote all his mind to what the dying man had to say. The next words were startling.

"Do you believe that the *impulse* to a certain type of crime is hereditary? What has been your experience of this in your career as a doctor?"

Doctor Jim answered circumspectly.

"Where the parentage is thoroughly depraved, there is likely to be disease or depravity in the children, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. I don't quite know what you mean by the 'type of crime.' The children of a burglar, for instance, would not necessarily inherit his desire to acquire other men's goods. Some crimes are the result of depravity or disease, others are merely a question of the brain being ill-balanced or ill-proportioned."

The old man shook his head sadly. "What you say is sound, sir, and might well apply to all crimes and vices save *one,* but that one, alas! stands by itself. I am talking of the first real crime that was ever committed in this world"—here he paused, and the next words were forced out in a husky whisper—"of the crime of *murder,* the sin of *Cain who killed his brother, Abel!*"

Old Craddock leaned back, looking more like death than ever, but watching the other intently.

If Doctor Jim understood what was coming, he certainly gave no sign, but replied in matter-of-fact tones:

"Do you actually want me to say that I think the impulse to kill may be handed down from father to son? It would be nothing but a far-fetched obsession to imagine such a case!"

"Thus speaks the man of science! The facts of the Bible speak for themselves. The mark of the murderer was set upon Cain and his seed forever, they could not escape from it! When Cain lifted up his hand against his brother, he not only originated a *crime,* but an *impulse* also, and it is that which has been handed down from generation to generation, breaking out inevitably in one and the other. Look how the instinct to kill broke out immediately in the case of Lamech, the son of Cain! How he called his wives together to listen to his bitter confession that he had 'slain a man to his wounding and a young man to his hurt!' There you have it, the certain proof of the hereditary instinct!" The old man leaned forward, trembling with excitement, and thumped the floor with his stick. "And as the seed of Cain has multiplied, so has the race of murderers increased and overrun the earth!"

Doctor Jim laid a restraining hand on the old man's knee. "Mr. Craddock," he said gently, "you seem to know your Bible well, has it not taught you that the ways of the Lord are wise beyond our understanding? The same Lord who allowed Abel to die, allowed Cain to live and bear fruit! Does it not strike you that there was some reason for that? Somewhere in the same Book, there is a line: 'Woe unto him *by whom* offenses come!' And it has always seemed to me that those who goad their brothers to madness and murder fully deserve what they get, and are a good deal more to blame than their brothers. I am quite sure you know," he went on with a smile, "that Abel was a very irritating and priggish young man, and that Cain, with all his jealousy and quick temper, was the fitter of the two to live and beget children!"

But there was no smile on Craddock's face. He was leaning forward with both hands on his stick, looking tensely before him. The clock in the hall struck the half hour, and the fire caved in with a rustle, making a fresh spurt of flame.

"Your words are soothing, sir, but there is no comfort for such as I! No man living knows what I am going to tell you, a stranger, now, but I must unburden my soul ere I die!" He paused, and little beads of sweat stood out on his forehead as he continued:

"I, Richard Craddock, like my father before me, God rest his soul, *have killed a man!* Thirty long, dragging years ago, I was walking in my fields, at the far end of the west plot. It was near Dunnet's pool, as they call it hereabouts, a lonely spot. There's a field on one side. I was always dead against poach-

"He taunted me and leered in my face. And I—I could not see for madness!"

ers, and I saw a man moving among the trees. I shouted to him. He waited till I came up with him. A slouching, evil-looking brute he was, and not of these parts; he spoke like a townsman. I accused him of poaching. He swore horribly.

"I ordered him out of my grounds. Then he taunted me with my father, my beloved father, came close and leered in my face. And I—I could not see for madness! It was so easy—so quick—just like this——" The old man stretched his arm out and worked his fingers convulsively, living over again the whole scene, moment by moment.

He gasped at the vividness of it.

The doctor bent forward quickly, and patted the arm of the other's chair.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Craddock," he said soothingly, as one might speak to an excited child, "I understand exactly how you felt! Any other man would have done the same; I am sure I should myself!"

The idea of their adored Doctor Jim hurting a fly would have brought smiles to the faces of the villagers of Thatch End. The old man's excitement calmed down, and he fell back exhausted in his chair.

"The body still lies at the bottom of Dunnet's pool," he whispered, "and never a soul knows it to this day!"

"Now doesn't that prove that nobody missed him?" exclaimed the doctor cheerfully. "The bottom of Dunnet's pool is the best place for such a blackguard, best place in the world; he never ought to have been out of it! And now, listen, why don't you try and forget all about it? Send for your daughter, and some servants, and enjoy what is left of your life. Make up for lost time."

He smiled as he finished.

But Craddock shook his head. "The curse of Cain broke out in my father, although he killed his man in what the world calls 'self-defense.' I am of his seed, and according as the Lord has decreed in His Book, the curse is on *me,* his son. Supposing"—and here his voice grew husky with horror—"that the curse should be also on my daughter, the third generation, my innocent baby girl? That has been the horror of my life, waking and sleeping, and I have done the little I could to mitigate that possibility.

"I sent her away at once, so that she need not be contaminated by the presence of her father, a murderer, likewise my servants. I would not willingly have had one human being about me.

For, if the truth were known, I would have hung as my father before me! But I could not bequeath to my child the name my father bequeathed to me. Therefore I kept my silence and set me my own penance. These thirty years has my life been a burden and a torture to me, but now, thank God, the end has come, and there is peace beyond the grave!"

The bitterness of one who has a grievance against life, the bitterness of obsession, the concentrated bitterness of years filled the voice that stopped speaking.

The doctor shook his head sadly. He had dealt with various forms of mania and knew the futility of logic against certain degrees of obsession. He could also see that Craddock's hour was drawing nearer.

"Is there anything you would like me to do for you? Anybody you would like to see? Why not let me send for your daughter?"

The old man turned and looked at Doctor Jim with blood-shot eyes. "You can do this for me, sir: find a home for my little changeling, Brenda, look after her when I am gone. As for my daughter—God knows I want to see her. Dare I, I wonder; but what would she think of her father?"

"She need never know, sir! It is our secret!"

"Secret? Secret? There are no secrets in the sight of God!" The old man's voice grew louder, his eyes grew strained and fixed, as at some distant object—the eyes of a fanatic.

It was at this moment that Mrs. Jenkins elected to bring Brenda to say good night. She had waxed impatient at the length of the doctor's visit, and, having heard nothing from her point of vantage outside the door but monotonous discourse most unsatisfying to her curiosity, she now brought a legitimate excuse in the shape of the baby. She opened the door just in time to see her master stagger to his feet and shake his fist in the air.

She was unnoticed by the two men at the far end of the room. Doctor Jim had risen also, and stood watching the tragic outburst of a worn-out heart with a world of sympathy in his eyes, the expression of one who sees his brother die before him, yet is powerless to save him from himself.

The firelight, flickering uncertainly, lit up the gaunt figure of the old man, now drawn up to his full height, lit up his shaggy white hair and straining, blood-shot eyes. It showed him beating the air with his fist, as he cried aloud in his bitterness.

"I am ashamed to face my child, my daughter, *ashamed!* For am I not of the seed of Cain? Grant me thy pity, Lord! *De profundis, clamavi!* I have slain a man to my wounding and a young man to my hurt!"

Then, leaning heavily on his stick, he covered his eyes with his hand and went on in a voice from which all madness had departed, and which was now only feeble and old, and very tired:

"And my punishment has been greater than I can bear!"

His strength was spent. He swayed and would have fallen had not the doctor stepped forward and helped him back to his seat, looking down at him with a great pity. Little Brenda had struggled out of Mrs. Jenkins' arms, that worthy's faculties being quite paralyzed with astonishment. Brenda toddled across the room toward the old man, climbed up unhindered onto his knee, and snuggling her face against his, she stroked his cheek, saying, "Poor, poor! Blenda love gwanfa better!"

Painful tears rolled down the old man's face as he tried to respond, but even this was beyond his strength, and almost immediately he was seized with paroxysms of pain. The doctor did all he could, but the two watching thought it was the end as they watched the eye-

lids close, the hands hang limply down by his side, the chin sink lower on his chest. But life was tenacious of Richard Craddock. He opened his eyes and the doctor bent down to hear his whisper.

"I must see my daughter before I go. Fetch her to me quick! Fetch her yourself! Let nobody else tell her——"

Doctor Jim turned to Mrs. Jenkins, and they consulted together. It seemed that she had been in constant communication with the daughter, it being Richard Craddock's wish to be kept informed as to her welfare. Lucia Craddock had married a few years ago, a wealthy man name Legrave, and had lately come to live on an estate some nine or ten miles off.

"If I was you, sir, I'd go to the Craddock Arms and make 'em give you their fastest horse. Mr. Legrave, he bein' a huntin' man, 'll sure to have plenty of fresh ones to bring you an' her back with; that's what I should do, sir, if I was in your place!" said Mrs. Jenkins with voluble importance. She had set the child down and stood with her hands on her hips.

The doctor hesitated a moment and looked across at the lonely figure in the armchair. But there was no time to be lost, so, leaving detailed instructions with the woman, he turned to go.

A few minutes later the new moon saw Doctor Jim Forsyth making his way through the dank, overgrown pastures of Thatch, hurrying along the dark and crooked path that led to the little tradesmen's gate in the outer wall.

"Good thing there's a moon," he muttered to himself; "I should never have found my way out without it. New one, too. They say it's unlucky to see it through trees for the first time! But what has luck, good or bad, to do with me?" Which was an unwise remark, considering that he, at least, had all his life yet to live.

CHAPTER II.

A year has gone and the moon is bright
A gibbous moon like the ghost of woe:
I sit by a new-made grave to-night,
And my heart is broken—it's strange, you know!

Premonition.

ROBERT SERVICE.

It is unfortunate that all the science of the ages has never taught us the way to control our own hearts. Not even doctors are any better off in this respect than other men. Our hearts are not our own to do with as we like. Nature gives bits of them to others, not at all as we would choose, and woe betide us if those others lose, or maltreat, or even break the bits, or take them along when they depart beyond our ken. This is what old age means, so many bits of our hearts have been given away that we have none left for ourselves, to go on living with.

Even in youth, the discovery of the untouched portion of the heart is something of a shock, but to a man verging on middle age, it is an upheaval.

Doctor James Forsyth had enjoyed a particularly sound heart up to the present, but the more immune to the opposite sex a heart appears to be, the more Nature seems to take delight in smashing up all its defenses with one sudden, unexpected blow. It was so with Jim Forsyth when he first saw Lucia Legrave.

The guests assembled at Marston Court had just enjoyed a very excellent dinner at the expense of their host, Montague Legrave. The ladies in the drawing-room were discussing the affairs of their neighbors with that complacency which comes with comfortable repletion, when the door opened to admit, not the husbands they were expecting, but the butler. Crossing the room with sedate and imperturbable dignity, he informed his mistress in a discreet tone that Doctor Forsyth was downstairs in the library and wished to see

her immediately on a matter of grave importance.

"Doctor Forsyth?" she asked, puzzled. "I've never heard of him! Matter of grave importance? What on earth can he want? Do you know where he's from, Barfoot?"

"I believe 'e's driven over from Thatch End, madame, 'e told me to be sure to ask you to lose no time!"

"Thatch End? Oh, good gracious, it may be something about my father. I'll come at once, tell him! Will you all excuse me for a minute, dear people?"

"The beautiful Mrs. Legrave," as she was called by the countryside, was looking her best that night. She stood in the library doorway, a shimmering vision in white, her fair hair piled on top of her head, a questioning look on her sweet face.

When Doctor Jim saw Lucia he found out how tricky a newly found heart could be. His gave a kind of a twist inside him, a twist of fear at some unforseen calamity about to befall.

"Will you excuse me for a minute, dear people?"

"Your father is very ill," he said gravely. "He wants you. Can you get ready and come with me at once?" he hastened before she had time to speak.

At this moment there were voices outside and some one crossed the hall and opened the door. A man came in—barely average height and looking shorter because he was inclined to be fat. His sleek black hair was parted in the middle. He wore an eyeglass. He began speaking with querulous excitement before he was well into the room.

"Lucia, where are you? Everybody's alone upstairs; you must come back at once! What's all this about, eh?"

"I can't, Monty, Doctor Forsyth—this is my husband, Doctor Forsyth—has come to tell me my father is very ill, dying, and has sent for me to go to him at once."

Legrave took his eyeglass out and swung it round and round by its ribbon as he stood looking from one to the other. "Tut, tut—what?" he said. "I never heard such a thing at this time of night and in the middle of a dinner party, too, don't you know! You can't possibly go; I won't allow it! Tell her father, doctor, that I'll drive her over myself in the morning. That'll be time enough; too late now, much too late!"

Doctor Jim's serious voice answering reminded Lucia strangely of the deep-throated baying of a hound after the yapping of a spoiled lap dog.

"I fear the morning will not be time enough, Mr. Legrave; your wife must come at once if she wants to see her father alive. His condition was very precarious when I left, and his last words to me were—I must see my daughter before I die, fetch her to me, quick!' And I have come straight from him."

Lucia turned to her husband hastily and the tears stood in her eyes.

"Monty, dear, of course I must go to him, there's no question about it. You

must explain to the people upstairs and apologize for me."

He turned to Jim, flustering with annoyance.

"Most inconsiderate of the old man, most inconsiderate indeed! He's never done anything for his daughter all her life, and now he takes advantage of a fit of the blues to send and disturb her in the middle of a dinner party."

Doctor Jim stood looking down at him with his hands on his hips and an unusual look in his kind eyes.

"Death, Mr. Legrave, has little to do with dinner parties. If you will be good enough to give the order for a fresh horse to put in the trap, I will take your wife to her father at once. We may be too late. We have already wasted much time."

Lucia came forward and laid a hand on her husband's arm. "I am going up now to put on my things, Monty," she said, a little nervously; "shall I tell Barfoot about the horse, or will you?"

Legrave turned again to Doctor Jim, but meeting the latter's eyes changed his mind about speaking to him and he spoke to his wife instead.

"You must tell him yourself. I must go back and look after our guests. If you go, you go against my express wish, d'you see, my express wish!"

And so saying he fixed his eyeglass firmly in his eye and bustled out of the room.

Lucia followed him. "I shan't be long, Doctor Forsyth," she said, looking back at him.

"I shall be here," he answered, watching her till the door hid her from sight.

In after years the memory of that drive together and alone through the moonlight was of ever recurring sweetness. Lucia, wrapped in furs, with a blue scarf round her hair and her cheeks aglow in the cold was a sight to be remembered.

Once more the old bell clanged through the house and the doctor and Lucia waited listening for footsteps. They had not long to wait before Mrs. Jenkins appeared, holding a candle high above her head, the better to see "Miss Lucia," as she curtsied to her with the now-extinct dignity of an old family servant. "I gave the master your medicine, sir, an' he's sleepin' quietly ever since!"

"Shall I go to him at once, or had I better wait?" asked Lucia, turning to Doctor Jim.

"Come now with me," he answered, and he led the way with no easy mind. Lucia, following him, looked around her in the dim, uncertain light of the hall.

She shivered and drew her furs more closely. "I don't like it," she thought, "it frightens me somehow; it seems like the very home of tragedy! Poor father here all alone, all these years!"

Doctor Jim and Lucia both felt the great stillness directly they were inside the library door. Even the fire was subdued to glowing cinders. Drawn up in front of it and back to them was the armchair with the white head of Richard Craddock just visible above it. The doctor went forward hastily and looked down at him, then he came back to where Lucia stood.

"I am afraid it is the last sleep," he said gently, putting his hand on her shoulder, "but try and believe me when I say it is better that it should have been like this; better for you and for him."

Lucia went to her father's side and saw him for the last time, lying there as if he were asleep with all the stress and strain gone from his face, and on his knee, slumbering peacefully with her curly head on his breast was a little baby girl. Brenda's loving little hands had been the last to help him over the border, little Brenda, who knew nothing of tragedy and murder and lifelong secrets and death, but only knew that the pivot of her world, whom she loved

with perfect trust, "had a pain" and, therefore, had to be comforted. So Richard Craddock had found again after many days the bread he had cast upon the waters.

Doctor Jim stooped down and took the baby into his own arms while Lucia, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, sank down and hid her face on her father's arm.

The doctor brought the child across to Mrs. Jenkins, who had sunk into a chair with her black sateen apron up to her eyes. "The little one must come and live with me now. I promised I would take care of her, but I won't take her away from you for a few days; it wouldn't be fair to her!" the doctor said.

"Oh, sir, I can't abide the thought of losing her, poor lamb, and she'll feel that lost among strangers, bless her innocent heart!" Jenkins answered.

Doctor Jim wondered helplessly if his income would allow him two extra people in his household.

"Well, well, we must talk it over later," he said. "You had better put her to bed now, and come outside a minute, there is something I have to say to you."

On the other side of the door, Doctor Jim, with his hand on the door handle, spoke so sternly that the facile tears of Mrs. Jenkins began to flow afresh. "You came into the room when your master was telling me something that you were not meant to hear. Whatever you did hear must be forgotten, d'you see? Anyway, you know that the ravings of an eccentric old man on the verge of death have very little meaning in them, but be that as it may, they must *never* be repeated to *any one*, least of all to Mrs. Legrave. You understand?"

"Oh, yes sir, I understand," she sobbed. "I shouldn't think of such a thing, sir. I'm as silent as the grave, I never——"

Doctor Jim went back into the room. Lucia was still kneeling by her father's side.

"Come now," said the doctor, "you have stayed long enough. We must go and talk things over." They took a candle and went to the kitchen, where a fire burned. Thus it was when Mrs. Jenkins, coming down from little Brenda's bedroom later, found Doctor Jim stoking the kitchen range and Mrs. Legrave sitting in the rocking chair watching him, her face pale, serious, and tear-stained.

Long after Mrs. Jenkins snoozed in her chair, the two talked long into the night.

Such was the humble wake of Richard, the last of the Craddocks of Thatch.

CHAPTER III.

Bleeding heart and Love-in-a-Mist
Down by the garden seat,
Bleeding heart and Love-in-a-Mist
With Heartsease at their feet.

In due course the Legraves came to live at Thatch, but not before Montague Legrave's wealth had been applied to it. Armies of gardeners, builders, painters, carpenters, and house decorators transformed the old place out of all recognition. Legrave drove a tandem over from Marston two or three times a week to superintend renovations of his wife's new property.

"Think we shall be able to make something of it," he told his neighbors. "Fine old place, you know, or rather it will be when I've finished with it. The wife actually wanted to sell, but of course I wouldn't let her. She doesn't fancy the place for some absurd reason, but she'll come round when it's ready for her to step into. Preposterous idea to let it go out of the family; been in it for five hundred years. Silly old man, the father; went and shut himself up like a damned hermit and let the place go to rack and ruin, but the grandfather—now there's a man for you if you like? A man after my own heart, old Robert Craddock, though he did swing for murder. Fine sportman, I say? Fellow

Lucia whipped up her horse as she caught sight of the shabby figure pushing his bycicle up the hill.

insults him, he calls him out and they have a duel. Tut, tut, why they duel every day in Paris. A jolly good custom died out in this smug country. It's the only gentlemanly way of settling a dispute."

So Lucia followed the line of least resistance, as she nearly always did, and cheerfully went up to town to choose carpets. There was one reason why she wanted to go to Thatch that outweighed other reasons against going, though she hardly acknowledged this even to herself; this was a half-conscious wish to look up into a pair of gray eyes again, to feel them watching her tenderly, sadly, with something in them that she had never seen before.

She also felt that if she lived at Thatch End there would be some one within hail to whom she could turn if she was in a difficulty, some one utterly and absolutely reliable. She had never felt the need of any one before, but having been in one trouble with Doctor Jim to help her through, she knew instinctively that she would miss him if he was not there to turn to next time.

But it was some weeks after Lucia came to live at Thatch before she saw Doctor Jim. He found no occasion to take him up to the house and he was very busy at the time with an epidemic of measles among the villagers.

One day they met by chance at the bottom of Stowe Hill. Lucia was driving, and whipped her horse to catch up to him as she caught sight of a lonely figure in a shabby, crumpled mackintosh pushing his bicycle up the hill. He walked beside the trap while she rallied him on his unfriendliness in never having been to see her. Doctor Jim smiled up at her and defended himself. "It is so long since I've had either the opportunity or the time for that sort of thing that I've really forgotten the customs of polite society, you know. But if you need me in any way, you send for me straight away, Mrs. Legrave; don't hesitate. I'll come at once!"

"Yes, I'm sure you would, but why must I wait till I'm ill? Wouldn't you like to know me when I'm well, too?"

Lucia was probing deep now; her methods, when used on a raw hand like Doctor Jim, were rather cruel.

The doctor looked straight ahead of him.

"That goes without saying, of course. I don't like to think of you ill!"

"Well, can't you come in and have

some tea with me on your way home? You have to pass the house, you know, haven't you, so it wouldn't be out of your way?"

He accepted her invitation, calling himself a fool for not snatching the few moments of happiness that were likely to come his way.

They were at the top of the hill by now, and as Lucia turned her horse's head she looked back at Doctor Jim. "Till tea time, then. I am so glad you are coming. I may be all alone, but I can't promise!"

She laughed lightly, and the doctor rode off in the opposite direction, trying to persuade imself that it was the custom in polite society to say things one doesn't mean.

So on his way home he turned in at the great gates of Thatch, opened for him this time by a curtsying tenant of the lodge. The drive had been freshly graveled and the grass mown on each side of it. Up near the house a landscape gardener had been at work. There was not the smallest resemblance to the desolation of a few months back.

The door was opened by the imperturbable Barfoot in place of the erstwhile Mrs. Jenkins. He was shown into the drawing-room, where he found Lucia awaiting him. Lucia in black velvet with a soft white fichu crossed over her breast. Her chair and another was drawn up before a big log fire. A low tea table stood beside her, glittering with silver. Doctor Jim had forgotten how very pleasant the fleshpots were and how very beautiful. His senses reveled in the picture before him as he sank down wearily in the other armchair.

Lucia laughed at him for his dismay when he discovered the tracks his muddy boots were making on the white bear-rug. Then she suddenly remembered to ask after Baby Brenda. Brenda had been the source of much discussion between Montague Legrave and his wife. The latter had held herself to be responsible for the little waif her father had thought fit to adopt, but her husband had scorned the idea.

"I positively refuse," he had said furiously, "to have my house turned into an asylum for every gypsy's brat that's found under a hedge, d'you hear? It's putting a premium on illegitimacy, a *premium* on it! The proper place for the kid is the orphanage. So let me hear no more about it."

So Lucia wisely refrained from any more words, knowing that the child was comfortably housed for the time with Doctor Jim. He had settled the question very simply by going up to Thatch a few days after Richard Craddock's death, and taking Brenda home with him on the handlebars of his bicycle, a mode of travel of which she heartily approved.

On the question of Mrs. Jenkins, however, Lucia was adamant, so that worthy was made perfectly happy by the gift of a black silk dress and a promise of the position of housekeeper at Thatch till her dying day.

The clock chimed half past six when Doctor Jim remembered the time and jumped to his feet. In the hall he encounterd Legrave, who gave him such a curt good evening as to send a flush to his face.

"What's that fellow been here for, anything wrong?" Legrave asked his wife.

"No, nothing. He's been having tea here. He seemed so lonely that I asked him in."

"Tut, tut. Lonely nothing! When women get interested in lonely bachelors, there's no knowing where it's going to end. You're far too pretty to be entertaining lonely men, my dear."

"Don't be so silly, Monty, he's the doctor here, and a very clever one, too, they say. We shall be sure to have him here professionally one of these days, so why ever shouldn't we be friendly with him first?"

"I see no occasion for it at all, no occasion. We can very well wait till we have to know the fellow professionally. In my mother's day, we did not know our doctors and our lawyers and our business friends socially, and you are simply trying to raise this man above his station."

Lucia was very angry, a rare state indeed for her. Otherwise she would never had been so remarkably rash as to say what she did without weighing the probable effect of her words.

"You are talking rubbish, Monty, and I am ashamed of your snobbishness. Doctor Forsyth is a gentleman first and a doctor afterward."

Having delivered her ultimatum in a cold and level voice she went upstairs to dress for dinner without waiting for an answer.

CHAPTER IV.

The Moving Finger writes, and having writ, moves on. Nor all thy piety nor wit shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

OMAR KHAYYAM.

Jim went to Thatch the next day in answer to a summons from Mrs. Legrave to attend to her cousin, Florence Combermere, who was staying with her. Much to her hostess' delight Miss Combermere had developed a timely cold in the head. She sent down a message one morning to say she was quite unable to come down to breakfast. Whereupon Lucia trotted gayly upstairs to Miss Combermere's room and sat herself down on the bed. "Florence, darling, what an angel you are! Now we can have that nice doctor I was telling you about last night to come and diagnose your case. What a glorious excuse!"

"What utter nonsense, Lucia! I've only got a beastly cold; you can't have a doctor for a cold—don't be so silly!"

"Oh, but you can, my dear! You don't know how attractive he is, quite *painfully* attractive! Especially when he smiles and makes little wrinkles round his eyes! You'll never forget them, so gray and kind but rather sad all the same; oh, and he's so tall——"

"If that's how you feel about him," said Florence grumpily, "why on earth don't you say you've got consumption and see him every day?"

"Do I look like consumption, stupid?" replied Lucia with contempt. "Besides you know what Monty's like when he thinks he's jealous! No, I can't have him, but that's no reason why we shouldn't keep him in the family! He might fall in love with you, then you could marry him and stay here for weeks and then I'd see him every day," she finished up triumphantly, curling herself into a more comfortable position.

"People don't fall in love with you when you've got a cold! If you only knew how perfectly hideous I feel, you'd go away and leave me in peace!"

But Lucia insisted.

"I'll tell Monty you're delirious and we must send for the doctor at once!"

"Florence, darling, what an angel you are! Now we can have that nice doctor!"

Lucia jumped up, walked round the bed and stroked the eiderdown in its most mountainous part.

"Now do be a darling and be nice to him when he comes! I mean just pretend to be a teeny bit iller than you really are, for my sake, Flossie?"

No answer was forthcoming to this, so Lucia walked to the door, turning back to say she would send up a hot-water bottle at once and a mustard plaster. "I'm sure you use them for colds, but I can't think where you put 'em though!"

Downstairs, where Legrave was smoking his first cigar over the morning paper, Lucia adopted a different tone. "Monty, dear, I am quite anxious about Florence; her throat is bad and she aches in every limb and she looks so flushed! Really she talks quite queerly and excitedly just now. Don't you think we'd better send for the doctor? We can't run any risks with her you know. What would Aunt Jane say?"

Legrave looked up sharply.

"Tut, tut, a cold in the head, that's all it is. Women do make a mighty fuss about nothing. Still, if a doctor's necessary—if he's necessary, mind you—I'll send for our own man from Marston. I don't like the looks of this fellow here." And he kept his eyes on Lucia as he spoke.

But she had her wits about her this time.

"Very well," she replied coolly. "One doctor's just as good as another, and we certainly know him better, don't we? I was thinking of the delay and it would be a good three hours or more before old Doctor Stanton could get here from Marston, even if he were there when we sent. However, do as you like, I think I shall telegraph for Aunt Jane!" Lucia walked over to a side table and took some telegraph forms out of a drawer.

Legrave took fright instantly.

"Very well, very well, send for the devil himself if you want him," he said testily, "but for the Lord's sake don't wire for that nasty old cat unless the doctor says it's imperative—unless it's absolutely imperative!"

Doctor Jim did not get up to the House until quite twelve o'clock, by which time Legrave had gone out, having grown tired of hanging round "to be on the spot when the fellow came."

He was shown into an anteroom. Through the open doors he could hear a piano played very softly and some one—Lucia of course—singing "Kathleen Mavourneen."

"Kathleen Mavourneen, the gray dawn is breaking—
The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill;
The lark from her light wing the bright dew is shaking,
Kathleen Mavourneen—what, slumbering still!
"Oh! hast thou forgotten how soon we must sever?
Oh! hast thou forgoten this day we must part!
It may be for years and it may be forever,
Oh! why art thou silent, thou voice of my heart?"

The song stopped abruptly and he could hear her coming to him. He knew before she came of the faint, fresh scent of violets that she would bring with her, and he tightened his lips and steeled himself.

"Ah, Doctor Forsyth, how nice of you to come so quickly! But let's go into the other room while I send up and tell my cousin that you are here; shall we? She's not very bad, you know, but her mother's so fussy that we thought it best not to run any risks."

She led the way into the big drawing-room and walked over to where one of the French windows opened onto the lawn.

"Isn't it simply glorious to-day? Makes you glad to be alive! I simply had to put on summer clothes. In fact it's so hard to believe that it can ever be cold again that I've told my maid to put away all my winter things!"

"That's rather rash, isn't it? The month of May you know, and only the beginning of it, too!"

"Life wouldn't be worth living if one wasn't rash sometimes. I'm going out to lunch, you see, and I just had to put on a hat that suited my mood—but, of course, you can't be expected to understand these feminine idiosyncracies. Anyway you can't call my hat rash?"

Jim had his doubts about the rashness of the hat, it drooped in a tantalizing way that nearly hid her eyes, so he merely said, "Isn't it?"

"It's a very interesting hat," said Lucia meditatively, looking at the floor.

"Yes, that's just about the word for it," and he smiled.

A maid appeared at the door to inform them that Miss Combermere would be prepared to see the doctor in five minutes.

"Good old Floss," thought Lucia, "she might have made it ten!"

In the distance they caught sight of a child through the trees. "Oh, there's my baby!" Lucia exclaimed, pointing. "Just coming in from his walk. You've never seen him, have you?"

Now, fond as Doctor Jim was of children, for some reason or other he did not feel any particular craving for a sight of Lucia's baby. Queer, but that was how he felt about it. The heir of the Legraves was so hemmed about by nurses and maids, and so seldom taken outside the Thatch grounds, that the doctor had never yet run across little Robin Legrave. Fortunately Lucia, without waiting for an answer, remembered to ask after Brenda and expressed a wish to see her. Whereupon Doctor Jim rashly suggested that Mrs. Legrave look in and see the child some time when she was driving through the village.

The maid appeared a second time to say that Miss Combermere was ready to see the doctor. Lucia jumped up from the sofa, frankly confessing that she had "forgotten all about poor Florence." So had the doctor, but he didn't say so. Miss Combermere played up nobly to Lucia's highest expectations and laid claim to sundry aches and pains which did not exist, leaving Doctor Jim confirmed in his suspicions that with the rich a little illness goes a long way. He ordered her to bed for two days, a double dose of licorice powder and some hot port wine the last thing at night.

"Well," asked Lucia, coming back into her cousin's room after he had gone, "wasn't I right? Isn't he one in a million?"

"Everybody is for some one, but *you've* no business to be that some one, my dear!" was Florence's cryptic reply.

"Oh! Floss, don't talk like a moralist. Why was I born a woman and given seven senses? How can I help being attracted by some men more than others? If it's wicked and immoral for a married woman even to admire other men, then the marriage ceremony ought to include the deadening of one's sense of sight and hearing and feeling—but it doesn't and I—I'm *alive*. I've got good red blood in my veins and I don't seem to have had half the experiences other women have had! I want my 'crowded hour of glorious life' before it's too late, and it seems to me that the only way to have that is to live in the moment for the moment's sake, and let the future take care of itself!"

Lucia was standing looking out of the window. She had not meant to say as much or indeed anything at all, but her cousin's directness had opened the flood gates and let rebellion loose.

The vehemence in Lucia's voice made Florence realize with a shock how matters stood, and she began to beat about in her mind for judicious remedies.

She decided that the best attitude was one of utter indifference to any real seriousness combined with a little salutary chaff of the sort that makes the recipient feel small.

Florence spoke hastily. "Well, I

don't see any temptation to be the wife of a country doctor, I must say! Sorry I can't oblige you!"

"I suppose you'd have judged him quite differently if he'd been dressed in a frock coat and a silk hat like all your silly town doctors?"

"Well, he certainly needs a little polish, doesn't he?"

"What nonsense!" said Lucia indignantly. "He'd be just as attractive dressed as a chimney sweep. Oh, my goodness, there is the motor. I must go or I shall be late to lunch. Ring for anything you want." And she was off, banging the door behind her.

CHAPTER V.

'Tis all a Chequerboard of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays;
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.
OMAR KHAYYAM.

When Doctor Jim went home he found a note awaiting him from Mrs. Legrave. Being a little doubtful as to the sincerity of the wording, "My husband and I will be so pleased," he read it through several times.

He had a hasty lunch and then changed into a coat that was a little less shiny at the seams and a little less noticeably frayed at the cuffs than his usual one. Mid-afternoon found him cycling up the drive to Thatch with the sole purpose of leaving a message of apology to say he could not come.

Fate, however, semed to be playing this day straight into the hands of Montague Legrave, who came round the corner of the house just as the doctor was leaving the front door.

Giving the latter a cordial good day, he insisted, in such a way as to make refusal rude, that the doctor should accompany him to the stables to fetch a couple of pups, and thence to the tennis ground to see the new asphalt court.

Lucia looked round to see the amazing spectacle of her husband and Doctor Forsyth each with a pup in his arms walking down the steps with all the appearance of old friends.

Immediately the set was finished Legrave suggested another in which he himself should play against the doctor. Again Doctor Jim ventured to remind them that he could not stay.

"Very well, doctor," said Legrave, picking up his racket and walking off to his place on the court, "if you really must, we won't press you to stay. Come again another time! By the way, Lucia, if you are going up to the house, you might take the pups back to the stables. They're the deuce of a nuisance here. Perhaps the doctor will give you a hand before he goes." And taking no further notice of them, he began the game.

But during the middle of the second set, when Lucia and the doctor had been out of sight for some minutes, the host twisted his ankle so badly that he was obliged to limp off to the house in search of a bandage, leaving his guests to finish the set.

"Have you ever seen the view from the rose garden?" Lucia asked, as she led the way. "Then I'll take you round to the stables that way, it's much prettier!" Jim followed, seeing nothing but the shining coil of hair on a soft, white neck in front of him.

The view from the walk running alongside and above the sunken rose garden was one of the most beautiful in the county.

There was a broad stone balustrade all along the walk. The rose garden lay magically far below. Here they stood while Lucia pointed out the field where flowers bloomed. Then she hoisted herself with a little difficulty to a sitting position on the balustrade.

"The roses ought to be at their best in a fortnight's time," she said; "it's a little early for them yet."

The pups gamboled over each other

on the path and took small heed of the electric atmosphere that enwrapped the two at the wall.

"I really think I must drag myself away now, you know. I've got to get out to Margrave; in fact they've been expecting me before this." Doctor Jim looked at his watch.

Lucia's grip on the stone tightened. He was going away. When would she see him again? His very nearness turned her head and she felt that she must touch him if nothing else.

"Then help me down," she said, and put out her hand. Doctor Jim turned toward her, holding out both his hands as one would, but as he did so their eyes met, not as strangers nor as friends, but as the eyes of lovers meet, unveiled, unguarded.

Hastily the man recalled himself, put his hands deep into his pockets, walked away from her and looked out over the country, white about the mouth with the jaw set square.

Lucia slipped from the seat and came to him, resting her hand on his arm—she had this much excuse to touch him at last.

"Why did you do that?" she asked softly. Doctor Jim turned his head to look at her, all the sadness of hopeless renunciation back in his eyes. "My dear, my dear, don't tempt me—or any man, like that—don't you know?" he answered very low and gently.

"But I—I *want* you to kiss me! Why don't you?" She put both her hands upon his breast and stood there close to him, provocative, tempting, everything in the world but love, forgotten. He kissed her, hotly, passionately, holding her as if he would never let her go.

Legrave had stalked them carefully and successfully. His plans had gone like clockwork—much better than he had hoped.

Here he was at the dramatic moment —"the outraged husband bursting with righteous indignation," with all the pent-up fury of the week boiling underneath his sickly, cynical smile.

"A pretty picture! I feel quite *de trop,* don't you know! So there is something in village gossip after all, eh? A nice little return for my hospitality? The customs of your class, I presume? Lucia, I admire your taste!"

Lucia leaned against the balustrade, feeling strangely sick, quite unable to say a word in defense of herself. Doctor Jim stood silent, looking on as if at a play in which the central figure was some strange manikin going through his antics. And the manikin fumed on, purple with rage, eloquent in his wrath; the eyeglass, now forgotten, swayed backward and forward against his flannel chest.

He paused for breath, and in that moment Jim awoke. He covered the

"You devil! I'll make you pay for this!"

distance between himself and Legrave in two steps. He took the latter by the hinder part of his flannel breeches and dropped him neatly over the balustrade down into the rose garden below.

There was a thud, a few horrid oaths, and a hoarse "You devil, I'll make you pay for this!" Lucia shivered. She knew her husband.

Doctor Jim put his hand on her shoulder. "Would you rather I stayed or went?" he asked her.

"Oh, go, go!" she sobbed. "Go quickly now without seeing him, and *never* come here again unless *I* send for you!"

"Very well, but if trouble comes to you over this and you think I can be of the smallest use to you, send for me. I shall be there waiting, remember that!"

She caught up to him again before he had gone halfway down the path.

"It's been all *my* fault," she told him; "don't ever blame yourself, because I know quite well that *I've* done it all!"

If there had been rabid jealousy in Legrave's soul before, there was stark blue murder in it now. Nothing could ever appease that gnawing fury in his brain—nothing but the blood of the man who had tried to take his wife from him and then put him to shame before her.

He had never denied himself anything he really wanted in his life. He must, therefore, have adequate vengeance.

At last, with a flash of inspiration, the idea came to him and he flung himself down in a chair, the riddle solved.

Old Robert Craddock, of course, had solved the riddle in a decent, gentlemanly way. He, Legrave, could not do better than follow his example. Why, there was the identical case of pistols still hanging on the wall in the billiard room—how simple! How beautifully simple, and how silly of him not to have thought of it before!

There was small danger for himself; that cursed bounder was not likely to be able to shoot, he had probably never shot with anything but a pop-gun in his life. If he killed the doctor, as he hoped to, well, he could call in the servants at once, make a great show of contrition, and make an excellent case for himself out of Lucia's conduct.

He was not at all afraid of consequences. Robert Craddock had not gone carefully to work. Why, there was that case only the other day of a chap charged with murder having got off easily on account of the "unwritten law." He took his candle and stole quietly upstairs to bed.

Next morning, while Doctor Jim was busy in his office, a messenger came for him—a groom riding post-haste from the House with a verbal message: "He was wanted at once up at Thatch."

That was all—"wanted at once up at Thatch"—no clew as to who it was who wanted him or what was the matter. It might be Lucia who had sent for him, and as he thought it probable Doctor Jim left everything. He hastened on his bicycle and rode as though fiends were after him.

The Love Bird

By Ida M. Kier

Illustrations by J. J. Casey

BATHED in the golden sunlight of a balmy September afternoon, Westover Park was a picture to charm the eye.

The stately old dwelling in its setting of well-kept grounds was shadowed by rows of century-old trees with giant trunks and far-reaching branches.

There was about it, however, none of the weirdness and gloom which so often characterizes ancient, ancestral homes. The front of the house was open to the air and sunlight; windows raised, curtains flying; while four persons on the shady lawn lent a final touch of homeliness to the scene.

Two were elderly women—one sitting in an invalid's reclining chair; the other on a low hassock by her side. The other two, a slender, fair-haired girl and a tall, broad-shouldered young man were walking slowly down a path that led to the park gates.

They were absorbed in their own conversation after the manner of persons newly betrothed.

"I don't see any use in putting off our marriage till after I finish my medical course, Hope," he said earnestly. "Let's have our wedding at once and I'll take you to the university with me." His voice was eager, pleading.

But she shook her golden head and raised serious gray eyes as she said softly: "I would, Stanton, were it not for auntie. I dare not leave her now. She seems so frail lately."

She saw his look of disappointment. "Of course you are right, Hope," he answered. "I couldn't be so selfish as to ask you to leave her. We'll wait until next June, then there need be no separation. Aunt Cynthia can live with us at our place or we will stay with her here, whichever she wishes. Does that suit you?" he added laughingly.

She gave him a grateful look, then uttered an exclamation of surprise as an automobile turned in at the gate and rolled up the tree-lined drive toward the house. "Who can it be, I wonder. Come, let's go back and see."

The automobile stopped. A young man and woman who occupied the rear seat alighted and took out some bags of luggage. The former drew forth his purse and paid the driver. Then the machine turned and rolled away. Obviously it was a hired car and the travelers had come to stay.

A striking looking couple they were, both slender and of medium height, with dark hair and eyes. A similiarity in form and features denoted their near relationship.

"Foreigners," Stanton observed.

The strangers smilingly approached the group. Suddenly the girl stretched out her hands and, with an air of confidence, hurried straight to the invalid's chair.

"Something tells me this is dear Aunt Cynthia," she said in a voice that was mellow and sweet. It carried an unmistakable foreign accent.

The blue eyes of the invalid gazed wonderingly at the beautiful dark face bending over her; then she said simply: "I am Cynthia Westover. But I do not recognize you."

"Of course not," the stranger said, with a low, musical laugh. Then as she took Miss Cynthia's frail hand and stooped to kiss the pale forehead, she added: "How could you recognize me when you never saw me before? Never even heard of me? So let me introduce ourselves. I am your niece, Malete Westover—your brother James' daughter; and this is my twin brother, Ferdinand—your nephew."

The young man bowed and took Miss Cynthia's hand, murmuring some low words of greeting.

Miss Cynthia gazed from one dark face to the other as if she could not comprehend the meaning of what she had heard. "My niece—my brother James—my nephew——" she repeated dazedly.

"Surely you know you had a brother James!" Malete's soft tones expressed mild surprise.

"Yes—I know," Miss Cynthia said slowly, "but I do not remember him. He was much older than I. Cornelia"—turning to her aged companion—"you will remember James. I had quite forgotten him. He has been dead so long——"

"You are mistaken there, dear Aunt Cynthia," Malete's voice chimed in. "He died quite recently."

"Recently!" Miss Cynthia's eyes opened to their widest extent. "Surely there must be a mistake. James left home many years ago—— You tell it, Cornelia," she appealed to the other again.

Cornelia rose and took her stand behind the invalid's chair. She was an active old body near seventy, who had been born at Westover House and had served Miss Cynthia in every capacity from nurse maid to housekeeper, which last title she still retained. For the past several years the real duties of that office had been performed by younger hands, while Cornelia spent her time in personal service to her beloved mistress.

Strikingly plain in appearance was Cornelia, with a face so void of expression as to be almost sphinxlike; but her narrow eyes were shrewd with a faculty for seeing things others were apt to pass unobserved. These eyes were regarding the newcomers with a gaze which seemed to pierce them through as, in a clear, steady voice she began: "James Westover was Miss Cynthia's half brother, and was eighteen years old when she was born. He was always wild and reckless and never got along with his father. When Miss Cynthia was two years old, James had a bitter quarrel with his father and ran away. Nothing was ever heard of him, so we supposed he was dead."

"But he was not," Malete took up the story as Cornelia paused. "He went to sea, drifted to foreign shores and finally to Spain. There he married and settled down. He never talked of his early life to his wife and children, and we never knew we had relatives in America until shortly before father died. It seems that on a trip to Madrid a few weeks before he was taken ill, he had met an American who had come from

this vicinity. From him father learned that his own father had been long dead; and that the sister who had been a baby when he went away was mistress of the old home. Father must have thought and brooded over what he had heard, for when he became ill he began to talk of his boyhood home—beautiful Westover Park, he called it. He told us his life story then, and urged us to come here after he was gone. He wanted us to see his old home and our Aunt Cynthia. He made us promise to come and we have done so."

"Your mother—where is she?" Miss Cynthia questioned.

"I was just going to tell you," Malete replied. "Mother has a sister living in New Jersey. She naturally wanted to see her first, and we arrived at her home three weeks ago. Mother is not strong, and she was so worn out from her long journey that she thought it best not to come on—for a time at least. She sent you her love."

Silence followed again, which was broken by Miss Cynthia, saying: "You must pardon me. Your unexpected coming upset me. Let me present you to—— Hope"—then as the latter came forward—"Miss Hope Wayne, my adopted daughter."

Hope shook hands cordially with both strangers. And Cornelia, watching closely from her point of vantage behind her mistress' chair, saw that both gave an involuntary start of surprise at the words—"adopted daughter." Ferdinand's bold, black eyes dwelt in open admiration on Hope's fair, flowerlike face in its setting of golden hair; but in Malete's dusky orbs shone a sudden, baleful gleam.

Miss Cynthia next presented—"Our friend and neighbor, Stanton Lorimer;" then, motioning to the one behind her chair—"And this is Cornelia, my housekeeper and faithful friend."

Cornelia acknowledged the introduction by a curt nod.

"You may call Annette, Cornelia, and have her show our guests——"

"Good-by — good-by——" The words, uttered in harsh, raucous tones interrupted Miss Cynthia's gentle order, and the next instant a bright-hued object dropped from an overhanging branch to the back of her chair. From the seemingly shapeless mass of feathers was reared a crested head with hooked beak and beadlike eyes. "Good-by—good-by——" The words were repeated emphatically.

Miss Cynthia put out a hand to stay the progress of the ugly feet moving slowly along the chair-back behind her head. "This is Poll—another old friend who has been with me for many years," she explained. She did not add, however, that it was Poll's infallible custom to bid "good-by" on the spot to any visitors of whom he did not approve.

"Good-by!" he called again; and added: "Get out!"

Ferdinand grinned good-naturedly, but Malete drew back with a show of annoyance.

"You mustn't mind Poll," Miss Cynthia said apologetically. "He is a cross, unsociable bird—friendly with no one but Hope and myself. I believe we had better all go indoors," she added as she rose and drew her shawl about her shoulders. "That wind feels cold. I fear there is going to be a change."

"I fear so, too," Cornelia muttered to herself.

The evening was spent in the old-fashioned drawing-room, seldom used by Miss Cynthia's small household save when there was company.

The most of the talking was done by Malete, who gave interesting and graphic accounts of their life in Spain. She related numerous incidents concerning her father, and fetched from her traveling bag a box containing some photographs of him. Miss Cynthia ordered the old family album brought, and

a duplicate of one of the pictures James Westover at seventeen—was found in it. His likeness could be easily traced in the later photographs.

Ferdinand said but little. He seemed perfectly willing to allow his sister to do all the talking, and during the whole evening he scarcely removed his eyes from Hope's face.

At an hour much later than the usual bedtime, Stanton Lorimer rose to go.

"What beautiful moonlight!" Malete, who had also risen and gone to the window, exclaimed. "Come, Hope and brother," she added; "let's accompany Mr. Lorimer to the gate."

The four young people strolled slowly across the grounds, drinking in the beauty of the night. At the gate Stanton lingered, then seeing there would be no opportunity for a word alone with Hope, he bade them all a formal "good night."

"What a handsome man!" Malete exclaimed as she watched his tall form swinging along the moonlit road. "I admire big, blonde men. I suppose it's because I'm small and dark. I've always heard that people are attracted by their opposites. And since that's the case, he must surely admire me!" she added exultantly.

Somehow the words fell heavy on Hope's heart.

"What do you think of them, Cornelia?" Miss Cynthia asked the question as the two sat alone before the dying fire.

"They don't look a bit like Westovers," Cornelia answered promptly.

"No—they are like their mother's people, Malete says," Miss Cynthia returned. "But their story must be true."

"It sounds well enough," Cornelia was forced to admit, "still—somehow I can't help being suspicious."

There was a long pause, then Miss Cynthia said slowly: "Cornelia, I have often trusted to your judgment and found it good. If you see or hear anything to warrant your suspicions, I want you to tell me."

"That I will," Cornelia promised. To herself she added: "Their coming bodes no good for this house."

CHAPTER II.

"Good morning. Cornelia told me where to find you. May I come in? Oh, what a beautiful place!"

Malete uttered the sentences all in a breath as she stood on the threshold of a room which occupied almost the entire south wing. She had reached the doorway by following a long corridor which connected with the main hall. Her dark eyes flashed here and there, taking in every detail of the charming interior.

The room was rectangular in shape, and the entire south end was of glass—a mammoth bay window composed of many glistening panes. There were no shades, and the morning sunlight streamed in unhindered. A miniature forest of growing, green things were banked along the walls. Directly in front of the window a number of tall palms and feathery ferns had been arranged to form a semicircle, and in the midst of this bower of green Miss Cynthia sat in an easy-chair.

"Certainly you may come in," she said smilingly. Hope, who was standing beside a thrifty lemon tree feeding Poll choice bits of food from a saucer, gave Malete a friendly greeting.

"I never dreamed you had such a nook as this," Malete observed as she went forward. "Where did all these beauties come from, auntie?"

"Growing rare plants and flowers has long been my hobby," Miss Cynthia explained. "This collection represents the work of years."

"I noticed the corridor yesterday the minute I stepped inside the door, and wondered where it led. Are there any secret rooms in Westover House, auntie?"

"No—nor ghosts," smiled Miss Cynthia. "Everything here is very open and unmysterious. But you have not breakfasted," changing the subject. "We did not wake you as we thought you would be tired. Hope and I are early risers."

"Brother is, too," Malete returned. "He is not in his room, so I suppose he went for a tramp."

"I waited to breakfast with you," Hope said. "Auntie will have her coffee here and you and I will go to the dining room after I finish feeding Poll."

"Let me feed him." Malete picked up a morsel and held it toward the bird,

"Don't touch me!" Poll cried savagely, with a wicked look. "Don't touch me! Get out!"

Malete's short laugh was a mixture of amusement and anger, then she said: "Don't worry. I wouldn't touch you for worlds. I hate parrots."

Breakfast was in progress when Ferdinand came in, flushed with exercise and "hungry as a wolf." He was in gay spirits, and expressed himself as much pleased with all he had seen.

"I walked as far south as the high road," he said. "I suppose it is the boundary line."

"Between the Westover and Lorimer estates," Hope replied as she poured his coffee.

Malete leaned forward, her eyes glistening. "Is it as large and as fine an estate as this?" she asked eagerly.

"It is much larger," Hope answered.

"And the young man whom we met here yesterday—is he the heir?" Malete questioned further.

"Stanton is master," Hope told her. "His parents are dead. He lives alone in his great house with his servants."

"What a splendid catch he would be!" Malete exclaimed, half playfully, half seriously. "I think I shall set my cap for him."

There was a note of earnestness beneath the jesting words.

The morning was spent in "getting acquainted," as Miss Cynthia expressed it. She and Hope did their utmost to entertain their guests.

As on the evening before, Ferdinand took little part in the conversation; but as Cornelia dryly observed: "Malete talked enough for both." The girl's speech like her movements was rapid, and while she talked her hands were in constant motion—making sudden gestures; clasping and unclasping. Her eyes shifted here and there in a manner denoting nervousness or fear.

During the afternoon Stanton Lorimer came over, and at Malete's suggestion the four young people went for a picnic in the woods. Supper was eaten, gypsy-fashion, around a camp fire built on the shore of a lake; then followed a boat ride over the smooth waters, after which came the walk home by moonlight.

From the moment of his coming Malete took possession of Stanton. She monopolized his attention as if he were her own especial property. Hope, who was left to Ferdinand, to the latter's unconcealed delight was feeling far from happy. Were people attracted by their opposites? Watching Malete's vivid, sparkling beauty; her animation and piquant charm of manner, Hope could easily see how any man might be attracted by her. The first cloud began to dim the hitherto blue sky of her happiness.

When Stanton left them at the park gates, Malete's was the last hand to clasp his in farewell; hers the last voice to wish him good night.

Stanton left the next day for the university. He came to Westover House during the forenoon to bid all goodby. But if he and Hope wished for a moment alone they were disappointed. Malete was ever-present. Hope saw she was to be deprived of his farewell kiss and the tender words of parting she had longed to hear him say. And was it her

Supper was eaten, gypsy-fashion, around a camp fire built on the lake shore.

fancy? Or did his eyes avoid hers and cling to Malete's bewitching face?

"I will not see him again until Christmas," she told herself. "But I will have his letters. He will write to me soon." She took comfort in this thought.

Malete rose earlier than usual the next morning. When she reached the Green Room she found Miss Cynthia before her.

"I'm all alone," the latter said. "Hope has gone to the gardener's cottage with some dainties for the children, who are ill with measles."

Malete was secretly pleased to find Hope absent. "Auntie," she began, with a pretty show of pouting, "there will have to be a change here. If things go on as they have for the past three days, I will develop into a regular lazy-bones. I do not like being idle. I want to be busy, and you must let me do for you the things Hope does. She deserves a rest."

The sincerity with which the request was made pleased Miss Cynthia. "It is very kind of you to offer your services, Malete, and I thank you," she said. "Maybe it is my imagination, but I thought Hope looked pale this morning. I fear she needs a rest, too."

"Why couldn't she go somewhere on a vacation?" Malete's eyes lighted with the thought that so suddenly popped into her head.

Miss Cynthia considered. "Why," she exclaimed presently, "Hope might do that very thing. She has an invitation now to visit a school friend in Springfield. If she would only go——"

"Indeed she must go. You must insist on it, auntie," Malete was fairly quivering with eagerness. "Now is her opportunity—while I am here to take her place."

Hope was amazed when she came in to find her vacation all arranged. In vain she protested. Her every objection was overruled. Miss Cynthia's heart was set on her going. Her wardrobe was ready. The friend's invitation was waiting to be answered. All there was to do was wire that she was coming.

"But to go so far, auntie," Hope exclaimed. "Quite across the State. I don't like to leave you."

"The idea!" Malete cried in an injured tone. "As if auntie will not receive as good care in my hands as in yours!"

"What shall I do?" Hope appealed to Cornelia. "I don't want to go. Something tells me I should not."

"I don't see how you can help yourself," Cornelia replied. "They're bound you shall take the trip. So go on and don't worry, dearie," she added. "I'll keep an eye on Miss Cynthia—you may be sure of that." And then to herself Cornelia mumbled: "I'll keep an eye on that minx, too."

The unfavorable opinion she had at the first formed of Malete had not improved with longer acquaintance. "I'd like to know what them two were talking about out there on the lime walk last evening," she went on. "I heard her call him to come and look at a bird's nest; but I'll guess it was something else she wanted."

If Cornelia had heard that conversation in the lime walk, she would indeed have had food for thought.

"Well—what do you think, Ferd?" Malete had asked quickly, as her brother joined her in their evening walk. "We haven't had a chance to talk privately since we came. Here—pretend you're interested in these nests."

"Everything's gone fine so far," Ferdinand returned. "Looks like it might be an easy job if nothing goes wrong."

"It's up to us to see that nothing does," Malete declared. "Of course we didn't find all as we anticipated," she went on. "We hadn't heard about the adopted daughter; and I certainly never dreamed of finding Aunt Cynthia so frail. She's not long for this world."

"Do you think she's going to be easy to manage?" Ferdinand inquired.

A frown furrowed Malete's smooth brow as she said slowly: "I'm not sure. When I get her all to myself—Hope's going to-morrow, thank goodness!" she broke off, "and I engineered that job, too. I hate her—with her doll face——"

"I don't," Ferdinand declared with spirit. "I think she's lovely."

"Of course any one can see you're smitten," Malete said with a short laugh. "Well, I've no objections to her as a sister-in-law. I'll help your cause along, Ferd, by taking that handsome young doctor out of your way. I made it a point not to let him and Hope have a minute to themselves before he went away."

"Now, Malete"—Ferdinand's tone was warning—"you'd better not get mixed up in too many undertakings. You'll have enough to do if you carry this other through."

"I'll carry it through all right." Malete's tone was confident. Then, after a pause, "I hate that old cat—the housekeeper! She's always snooping about."

"Now, Malete, you'd better not get mixed up in too many undertakings," Ferdinand said.

"Say you ought to be getting *that* letter to-morrow or next day!" Ferdinand suddenly exclaimed.

"Yes," was the reply. "It was to be mailed four or five days after we left."

"Suppose it will work?"

"That remains to be seen."

CHAPTER III.

It was with a troubled heart that Hope started on her journey. She was going against her better judgment but she was obeying Miss Cynthia's wishes. Tears welled in her eyes as she lingered by the latter's chair. Try as she might she could not rid herself of the feeling—the vague presentiment—that she was leaving forever the old happy, peaceful life which she and her foster mother had enjoyed together.

Malete assured Hope over and over that she would take the best care of "dear auntie." While she gave no definite statement as to how long she might say, she intimated that she would be at Westover House for as long a period as Hope cared to be gone.

Hope wished she might have heard from Stanton before she left. She felt sure he would write to her as soon as he reached his destination. But his letter would be forwarded to her, of course.

Thinking no doubt that life would be dull at the house with Hope gone, Ferdinand set out immediately after her departure for a long tramp through the woods.

Malete devoted herself assiduously to Miss Cynthia. Her deft fingers performed every task Hope had been accustomed to do, save one—feeding Poll. The parrot obstinately refused to make friends with her and was so vicious in his actions that Malete let him strictly alone.

It had been Hope's task to sort the mail which Barney, the chauffeur and errand boy, brought twice a day from the village. On the morning after Hope's departure Malete assumed this task. There were some letters and magazines for Miss Cynthia, Hope, and the servants.

"A letter for me!" Malete exclaimed. "And from Trenton! Oh, dear! What can that mean?" Feigning great surprise she sank down on a low stool and nervously tore the envelope across. Miss Cynthia, absorbed in a letter of her own, did not notice that the envelope Malete was tearing covered a smaller one which, when an opportunity afforded, the girl quickly slipped into her pocket.

Malete read the brief epistle, drew a sharp breath, then sprang up and began to pace the floor distractedly. "What shall I do? What shall I do?" she moaned, wringing her slim hands together.

"My dear," Miss Cynthia cried in alarm, "what has happened?"

"My mother!" Malete answered in a choking voice. "She was taken ill after we left—was sent—to a hospital. This letter is from Aunt Carlotta—mother's sister. It was mailed—let me see—five days after we left," she added, after consulting the post mark. "Oh, poor mother——" She began to sob and wring her hands again.

"It is very sad indeed," Miss Cynthia said sympathetically, "but do not distress yourself so, my dear. Must you return at once?"

"Oh, no," Malete said hastily. "Aunt Carlotta told me not to come as I could not possibly do any good. She says the worst is over now. She believes mother will get along all right if she could only have proper care and nourishment——" She paused and bit her lip as if she had not meant to say so much.

Miss Cynthia looked puzzled, then she exclaimed: "Care and nourishment! Will she not have that?"

A pause followed the question; then all at once Malete threw herself on her knees beside the chair and burying her

face in Miss Cynthia's lap, sobbed out: "Oh, I didn't mean to tell you, auntie, and I never would if this dreadful thing hadn't happened; but we are so poor—so poor——" Another pause, broken by stifled sobs; then she continued: "You see mother has no money to pay for a good doctor the things she ought to have in order to get well. But—believe me, auntie—I would never have told you; even if father did beg me to——" She pressed her hand tightly over her mouth and raised imploring eyes to Miss Cynthia's face.

The latter divined the meaning of the unfinished sentence. "Did your father wish you to ask me for money?"

"Y-e-s," Malete seemed reluctant to admit the fact. "You see—he was always a poor man. It was when he found he could not live that he made us promise to come to you. So after his burial we sold all our things. It took nearly all we had to get us to California. There was barely enough left to bring brother and me here. Father wanted me to ask you," she went on hurriedly, "if you did not think his children were entitled to a share of the Westover fortune? He said he had lived his life without any of it. He would never have asked a cent for himself; but he wanted us—— He didn't mean after you are—gone, auntie; he just wanted you to give us what you are willing we should have—what you think we deserve. That is what he wished me to tell you, auntie. Now I have done it; and, oh, I hope you don't think badly of me!"

"Indeed I do not," Miss Cynthia assured her. "You have done right to tell me your true circumstances. I will see that your mother's needs are attended to. Run out in the grounds for a while now, my dear.

Malete humbly obeyed the unexpected dismissal. The dark eyes behind her handkerchief were glowing with elation.

As the girl left the room Cornelia stepped from behind a portière which

Malete threw herself on her knees, sobbing: "Oh, I didn't mean to tell you, auntie.

shut off a small alcove. "I was there when she commenced her tale," she stated simply as she approached her mistress' chair, "and I stayed and heard it through."

"What do you think, Cornelia?"

Cornelia shook her head dubiously. "Sounded to me as if she was putting it all on."

"Still—it may be true," Miss Cynthia observed thoughtfully; "and I can't refuse to help my brother's wife—if she is in need."

"I suppose not," Cornelia agreed, "but I'm going to say this, Miss Cynthia. James got his share—and more—of the Westover money long ago. I didn't tell the whole story of his going away—I didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings; but James was always a bad one. Before he ran away he forged his father's name to a check and stole all the family jewels—your mother's among them. It's no wonder he never let himself be heard from. I wouldn't be hasty about giving these two anything. Wait till you see Judge Channing, and talk it over with him."

"Judge Channing is at the county seat

and will not be back for several days," Miss Cynthia said. "I'll leave the *one* matter till he comes, Cornelia, but I'll give Malete a check to send her mother at once. Then I'll feel that I've done my part by her, at least; and it is the best feeling in the world, Cornelia—the feeling that you have done what is right."

True to her word, Miss Cynthia presented the check to Malete when she came in. The latter very humbly and earnestly expressed her thanks.

"Concerning the other matter you mentioned," Miss Cornelia said, "I would rather wait until I have consulted with my lawyer, Judge Channing. He has been my legal adviser for years. I made my will some time ago." "With the exception of legacies to Cornelia and some other faithful friends, all that I possess is willed to Hope, whom I always have called my adopted daughter, although I have never gone through with the legal formalities of adoption. I never thought it necessary. Hope's parents were dear friends of mine. Both died when she was small, and I have reared her from infancy.

"When I made my will," Miss Cynthia said as Malete remained silent, "I was, of course, not aware that I had relatives. I assure you that I would have the right thing done by my brother's children, and when Judge Channing comes I may make a new will."

After another silence Malete said timidly: "Just supposing, auntie, that you should not live to make a new will?"

"Then in accordance with my present will—all my posssessions would go to Hope."

"And if—pardon me, auntie for being inquisitive, but I know so little of your laws—— But supposing you should die, and leave *no* will—— What then?"

"In that case"—Miss Cynthia paused while her blue eyes studied the dark face—"in that case," she repeated, "I presume you and your brother, as next of kin, could lay claim to the whole of the Westover fortune."

The subject was dropped. Both were silent, each busy with her own thoughts. Miss Cynthia leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes; while Malete sat staring down an aisle formed by two rows of tall plants, thence through the window at the end. The panes were spattered with rain drops which were falling thick and fast. Her thoughts turned to her brother. He had been gone all day, as usual, to the lake or woods. "He will get a good soaking," she thought when a sound caused her to turn in Miss Cynthia's direction. The latter was lying back in her chair as if lifeless.

Malete's startled scream brought Cornelia. In an instant the latter was applying such restoratives as were at hand. After a few minutes her efforts were rewarded. Miss Cynthia drew a breath —another; then slowly the color came back to her face.

"One of my old spells again," she murmured weakly. "Just a light one—Cornelia?"

"Yes, but I'll send to Doctor Mayes," Cornelia answered.

When the doctor came he found Miss Cynthia cheerful and seemingly quite herself. He gave the usual prescription and after a friendly chat, took his leave. But he shook his head gravely when Cornelia followed him out of the room. "I can give no encouragement," he said frankly, "nor can I say you have cause for immediate alarm. She may live for weeks; and she may go in one of these attacks at any moment."

Malete, who happened to be in the hall, heard.

CHAPTER IV.

While Cornelia kept close watch over her mistress, she was at the same time keeping an eye on Malete.

The girl was obviously deeply worried over her brother's absence. She

haunted the windows, staring out at the dark grounds.

Night came swiftly down like a great, black curtain. The wind, sighing through the far-reaching branches, sounded like ghostly wails minging with the incessant murmuring of the rain. "I wish he'd come," Malete said over and over, sometimes to herself, sometimes aloud. It was evident that her anxiety was real; her nerves strained to the breaking point.

"She's got more on her mind than the fear that he'll get wet," Cornelia told herself. "I'd like to hear what she says to him when he comes." All at once Cornelia raised her head. Her sharp ears had caught a familiar sound. Ferdinand was coming—whistling despite the rain. "He always comes in at the south side door," Cornelia muttered. "If I could be there——" She glanced at Miss Cynthia who was peacefully sleeping; then glided from the room.

Malete had heard the whistle, too. She came flying down the hall as the door opened and Ferdinand entered. "Ferd," she exclaimed in an undertone, as she grasped his wet sleeve, "I've nearly died this last hour. You're always gone! There's something I want to tell you."

"What is it?" He asked impatiently as he removed his dripping hat.

"We can't talk here," Malete answered hurriedly. "Change your clothes and swallow your supper—then go to the drawing-room and stay there till I come. Now mind——" She ran away and Ferdinand went to his room. Then what had seemed to be a shadow detached itself from the wall and noiselessly entered Miss Cynthia's bedroom.

A few minutes later Cornelia was instructing Amette, a housemaid, to sit beside Miss Cynthia's bedside until she —Cornelia—should return.

Ferdinand lay back in an easy chair before the drawing-room fire looking the picture of ease and enjoyment as he awaited his sister's coming.

Soon she came—feet moving swiftly, eyes shifting here and there, hands twisting. "You're gone from morning till night," she began in scolding tones.

"Well, what of it?" he interrupted. "It's no fun staying around the house with you and a lot of old women. What's happened?"

"Aunt Cynthia had a heart attack," Malete replied. "She almost died. I heard the doctor say she was liable to have another one any time. I told you she wasn't going to live long."

"I can't help it, can I? he inquired pettishly.

"I got the letter. Malete changed the subject abruptly.

"Well——" Ferdinand exhibited more interest.

"I told Aunt Cynthia about mother—and the other, too."

"What did she say?"

"Seemed to take it all in," Malete replied. "Gave me a check for mother. Wasn't as much as it might have been, but will do for the present. She won't do anything more till she sees her lawyer."

Ferdinand shook his head gloomily. "Game'll be up then. Lawyers always pry into everything."

"Mother expected an investigation, of course. But she don't think the truth will be found out. *We were so little.* But listen—Aunt Cynthia's made her will and left everything to Hope. If she dies and leaves that will, we won't get a thing. But if she dies and doesn't leave a will, we will get all, and Hope nothing. She told me so herself. Ferd," Malete bent nearer to him and lowered her voice, "Aunt Cynthia may die any time—to-night—that will's *got* to be destroyed."

"It will have to be located first," Ferdinand observed. "It may not even be here."

"I feel sure it is," Malete interrupted.

"She keeps her private papers in that great desk in the green room."

"Well—supposing it's there—— How are you going to get it?"

"You're so dense!" Malete cried impatiently. "The green room is the most isolated place in the house at night. No one is near it and the door is never locked. You must go there about midnight and search that desk."

"Why not go yourself?" Ferdinand grumbled.

"You'd have me do everything," Malete accused. "But you've got to do this, or——"

"Now, don't get excited and throw a fit," he said quickly, as if anxious to quiet her, "I'll do my best to get it."

"Please do, Ferd," she said coaxingly. "Try your best and if you fail, then I'll try. I'm determined to get possession of that will if it's in the house, if I have to——" She did not finish the sentence, but her black eyes glowed with an ominous light.

After giving her brother a few further directions concerning his midnight visit to the green room, Malete left the drawing-room. Ferdinand soon followed. Cornelia rose from behind an unusued fire screen which stood in the corner. Her mouth was set grimly. Going quietly to the green room, she opened a desk and took out a roll of paper. Then she as quietly went back to the bedroom she shared with her mistress and placed the roll under her pillow.

All night long the rain fell steadily; nor did it cease with the dawn. A leaden sky gave promise of a dreary, rainy day.

Miss Cynthia rose at her usual nour and insisted on going to the green room. It was there, before Malete came down, that Cornelia told her of what she had heard the night before. "I promised to tell you if I heard anything suspicious," Cornelia finished, "and I've kept my word. That minx said she'd get the will if 'twas on the place and she'll do it. I wouldn't want it in my possession another night. I'd be afraid of being murdered in my bed. You must give it to Judge Channing, Miss Cynthia, this very day."

"Why, Cornelia, that will be impossible. Judge Channing isn't at home and we couldn't expect him to come in this weather."

"I'll keep the will then, I suppose," Cornelia reluctantly agreed, "but I don't like to do it. I don't feel safe."

For some moments Miss Cynthia sat absorbed in deep thought, then she said: "Cornelia, put the will back in the desk, please; and get it when I ask you to."

Wonderingly Cornelia obeyed. She wondered still more when, later, after Malete had come and made a great fuss over "dear Aunt Cynthia," the latter said: "Cornelia, I wish you would bring my will from the desk yonder. I wish to look it over."

Malete could scarcely believe her ears. Ferdinand had told her that the will could not possibly be in the desk; that he had searched every drawer and pigeon-hole. And now it was being brought out before her eyes! She covertly watched Miss Cynthia as the latter sat with the roll of paper in her hands.

"Pardon my curiosity, auntie," she said at length, "but is that *really* a will? I never saw one," she added.

"You may see this one if you wish." Miss Cynthia unrolled the thick wrapper and took out a smaller sheet.

"Why, how simple it looks!" Malete cried. "I always imagined wills were very large documents—covered with fine writing."

"Not necessarily," smiled Miss Cynthia, "unless there are many bequests and many conditions imposed. This will is brief. It bequeaths all I have to Hope."

Malete inspected the document close-

Cornelia looked hard at the burning document. No explanation was made.

ly. The seal, the signatures—all were there. There could be no doubt as to its genuineness. She was holding in her hands that which she had vowed to destroy! If she could only do it now! But no. She must wait. She knew where it was kept and could easily get it later. She thanked Miss Cynthia for letting her see it and handed it back.

Miss Cynthia carefully rerolled the will in its thick wrapper and dropped it onto her lap, saying: "I want to think now. I must make up my mind how to dispose of this." She sat silent and thoughtful for so long that Malete grew tired of waiting. She was relieved when at last she was sent on an errand to the kitchen. She returned to find Miss Cynthia sitting just as she had left her —the roll still in her lap.

"You may bring me a match and that tray yonder," she said quietly. I am going to burn this." She picked up the roll as she spoke.

With her own hand Miss Cynthia struck the match and applied it to the paper tube. It burned slowly at first, then more rapidly until all that remained was a heap of flaky, dark ashes.

"Throw them in the fireplace," Miss Cynthia requested.

As Malete turned to obey, Cornelia came in. Her narrow eyes looked hard at the tray of ashes; at Malete's satisfied expression and Miss Cynthia's unperturbed countenance. No explanation was offered.

Night came again with the rain still beating its ceaseless tune on roof and pane. Fresh clouds boiled up in the southwest. The wind rose to a tempest. Vivid lightning and deafening thunder mingled with the roar of the wind and deluge of water.

While the storm howled without, all within the walls of Westover House was dark and quiet. In the midnight hour a door in one of the upper chambers opened softly and a figure which might have been a part of the darkness itself, flitted down a corridor and paused.

There sounded a succession of light taps followed by Malete's voice saying: "Ferd, are you awake? Come here."

A grumble sounded within, then the door opened noiselessly.

"Ferd," Malete's voice quivered with suppressed excitement, "we won't need to bother any more about the will. It's

destroyed. Aunt Cynthia burned it herself—before my eyes. Now if she'd only die before she could make another —— Good heavens!" Malete screamed and clappped her hands to her ears as an awful crash of thunder shook the house.

"Get back to your room," Ferdinand commanded sternly. "You'll be having another breakdown and rouse the house if you're not careful."

She forced her trembling limbs to obey. Then his door closed and silence reigned again.

CHAPTER V.

Four more days and nights of almost constant rain. Never in the history of the county had there been such a flood. Old settlers shook their heads and declared that all previous high water marks were passed. Hitherto peaceful streams were miles wide, covering hundreds of acres of bottom lands.

And on the morning of that last dreary day, Miss Cynthia's final summons came. She seemed to realize that it was the last "spell," and at the first warning of its approach she murmured to the faithful Cornelia: "Good-by. Give Poll to Hope."

Malete, who was present, heard.

The next day the skies cleared and the sun shone on scenes of havoc—property destroyed or damaged; crops laid waste. With bridges swept away and miles of railroad track washed out, train service was entirely suspended and travel made nigh impossible. Friends at a distance could not attend Miss Cynthia's funeral. Hope was not expected to arrive for days. The burial service was held and the gentle mistress of Westover Park was laid to rest.

Who would be mistress now? The servants were not left to wonder long. Immediately after her return from the cemetery Malete assembled them together and made a short talk.

"Aunt Cynthia told me that in case she left no will my brother and I would inherit the entire Westover fortune," she said. "She destroyed her will several days before her death, thereby showing that she wished us to be her heirs. Everything is now ours except the parrot. She left that to Hope."

Malete repeated this with all sincerity to Judge Channing when he arrived on the following day. The judge was an elderly man with kindly, jovial face and humorous eyes which grew sad when he spoke of his departed friend. He listened gravely to Malete's recital but made no comment.

Before leaving Westover House, Judge Channing had a talk with Cornelia which caused him to scratch his head and wrinkle his brows in thought.

"Did Miss Cynthia really burn the will?" he asked.

"Yes—I think the girl tells the truth about that," Cornelia answered. "I had told poor Miss Cynthia that I was afraid to have it in the house. I think she destroyed it to ease my mind and keep them from searching for it. I'm sure she meant to make another will when you come, but now—— If they have everything, what will poor Hope do?"

"Say no more about it, Cornelia," the old lawyer advised. "Just let matters rest as they are until Hope comes. Then we'll see."

Beyond a brief wire that she was "coming," nothing had been heard from Hope. She was on her way home, just as were hundreds of other weary, water-bound travelers who were forced to wait in out-of-the-way places for means of transportation.

On the second day after Miss Cynthia's funeral the welcome whistle of a locomotive was heard in Westover. Barney rushed down to the village and soon came back with a bundle of mail and some news. The "train" had consisted of an engine and baggage car and had brought only mail. A train carrying passengers would follow, the agent

said, and it was expected to be there by nightfall. Hope would probably be on it.

Malete immediately pounced upon the mail and sorted it. Two letters she retained for herself. She hurried with them to her room.

A few minutes later she was quietly letting herself into her brother's room. She found him stretched on his bed, fast asleep.

"Ferd," shaking his arm vigorously, "wake up! I've something to tell you."

"Hang it all," he growled sleepily, "can't you let a fellow alone?"

"No, you have something to do. To-night's our time for some quick work."

"What do you mean?"

"Hope is coming," Malete replied. "She'll be here about dark. And—some one else will be here in the morning. See?" She held a sheet of note paper before his eyes.

Ferdinand gave utterance to a low whistle. "I see," he said. "You opened her letter!"

"Sure," Malette answered coolly. "I've opened *all* he's sent her."

"They'll find it out," Ferdinand warned.

"Not if we play our cards right," Malete declared. "Of course, if they should get together, the game would be up. But they're not together yet and it's our business to keep them apart."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Listen to me——" Malete began to pace the floor and twist her hands, as usual. "Hope's coming to-night; Stanton in the morning. I'll meet her when she comes and give her such a reception as will make her decide to leave Westover House at once. I'll throw in a word about Stanton, too, to make her doubt him. Then when she's leaving, I'll send her to the green room after her valuable legacy"—laughing scornfully—"and then comes your turn. You're to go and sympathize with her. She'll be all cut up and will listen. Then tell her that Stanton and I are to be married; and that she can remain here as mistress. I fancy that would suit you."

"It sure would," Ferdinand declared with earnest candor. "I'd be the happiest man in the world if Hope would consent to that and marry me. But I'm afraid she won't."

"Yes she will," Malete assured him. "She's the sort who's never had to look out for herself. When she finds she's lost her lover and home and is penniless, she won't know what to do. She wouldn't go to any of her friends—fancy her braving the darkness and mud alone—and she'll fall right in your arms for the sake of having a place to stay. See?"

Ferdinand looked skeptical. "It might work out all right in one of your plays, sis, but I'm afraid it won't in this case."

He smiled grimly.

"It's got to!" Malete cried, stamping her foot. "I must be able to tell Stanton the first thing when he comes that you and Hope are engaged. Then he will meet her as a stranger, while she, believing he is engaged to me, will treat him coldly. See? Both are too proud to seek an explanation. So the game is in our favor," she finished, "and we're the winners if we keep our heads."

CHAPTER VI.

The train arrived shortly after dark. Hope Wayne was among the passengers. She was a pathetic little figure, shoulders drooping with fatigue; face pale and sad. She spied the Westover car and hurried toward it. Barney opened the door and Hope stepped inside to be clasped in some one's arms and held close to some one's breast.

"Oh, Cornelia," she sobbed.

"There, now——" Cornelia soothed as the purring car began to move. "I just had to have you a minute all to myself, so I slipped out and came to meet you."

"Is it really true about auntie, then? And is—everything over?"

"Yes, deary. The funeral was held Wednesday. We couldn't wait for you—not knowing when you would get here. I know it's hard on you," Cornelia added sympathizingly, "but try and get it off your mind, child. You've got other trouble to meet."

"What do you mean, Cornelia?" Hope's tear-dimmed eyes stared through the gathering gloom at the inscrutable face.

"I mean that you are in danger of losing your home," was the answer. "Miss Cynthia left no will and those two are going to claim everything."

"Didn't auntie leave me any word—any message?" Hope questioned.

"The last word she spoke was your name," Cornelia answered. "She was in the green room, deary, sitting in her chair. She just looked at me and said: 'Good-by. Give Poll to Hope.' Those were her last words."

Hope's tears started afresh. "Poor auntie," she murmured. "She gave me her dearest possession. She loved Poll."

Her voice broke.

There was silence for a moment, then Hope asked tremulously: "Did Stanton come?"

"No," was the reply. "We wired him, but I don't suppose he could get here."

"Have any letters come from him—for me?"

"No," Cornelia answered, "but that minx has been hearing from him. At least I heard her say so."

Stanton had not written to her, then; and he had written to Malete! A new weight was added to Hope's heavy heart.

The car stopped. "Run on in," Cornelia said as she held the door open for Hope to alight. "I'll go around to the rear with Barney." Cornelia did not wish to worry Hope by telling her that she—the trusted housekeeper and friend—was no longer welcome in the front of the house.

"Well! Here you are at last!"

Hope stopped short and looked up in surprise. She had stepped inside and was closing the great hall door behind her when the exclamation fell upon her ears. Then she saw Malete who was evidently waiting to greet her. But the voice was not soft and mellow as Malete's had ever been before. It had a harsh, metallic ring; and the black eyes were cold and hostile.

"I—couldn't get here sooner," Hope faltered.

"Of course not," Malete returned crisply. "And since you couldn't get here in time for the funeral, it's a pity you took the trouble to come at all. You might as well have stayed with your friends."

Hope was too thoroughly astonished to make reply. Sorrowfully she turned toward the stairway. Malete spoke again.

"I have made some changes since I became mistress here. I have taken for my own use the room you formerly occupied. You may leave your wraps in the drawing-room—while you remain."

Her voice was metallic.

There was no mistaking the meaning of the heartless words. Hope realized that she was no longer welcome under the roof that had for so long sheltered her. Her face flushed painfully, and as she stood irresolute, Malete continued:

"I see no use in mincing matters, Hope. I may as well tell you the facts. Aunt Cynthia destroyed her will—the one she had made in your favor. She did it in order to give her fortune to my brother and me. She doubtless considered that she had done enough for you, and I think so myself. You have had a home and care all your life and a fine education. Really, you are not so badly off after all. I suppose you are

qualified to hold some good position and can make your own living."

Without offering a reply Hope started for the door; but Malete had another card to play. Stepping quickly to Hope's side she drew a folded sheet of note paper from her pocket and, in a tone insolent with exultation, said: "This is one reason why I want no intruders here to-morrow." She held the note before Hope's eyes and the latter read: "Dearest: Am coming as quickly as possible. Expect to be with you in the morning. S. L."

"Stanton's message just reached me this evening," Malete added, her black eyes gloating over the stricken look that she saw in Hope's expressive gray ones. "We are going to make arrangements for an early wedding, and do not wish to be bothered."

"I understand." Hope's head lifted proudly and then, with a spirit which Malete did not dream she possessed, added: "Since I am not wanted here, I shall leave at once. I'm sorry I came." She walked resolutely toward the door.

Malete could not repress a smile of triumph. Her plan was working. She had roused Hope's pride; goaded her to anger. Now she would be in a mood for revenge, Malete reasoned, and would see her way to gain it through Ferdinand's proposition. It was time for his cue now, and Hope must be detained for that purpose. Malete smiled again as she thought how well she had planned that detention also.

"One moment," she called, as Hope reached the door. "You must take your legacy—the parrot. I insist on you taking the horrid creature as I will not have it under my roof. It is in the green room," she added, as Hope paused. "You will have to get the vicious thing yourself." With these words Malete turned and ran lightly up the stairs.

Hope hurried down the long corridor that led to the green room—the dear, pleasant room where she and Miss Cynthia had spent so many happy hours. It was with a feeling of reverence that she stepped across the threshold. The room was dark and the close, musty smell which greeted her, told her that it had been kept closed, probably since the day of Miss Cynthia's death. Her groping hand found the switch and the place was flooded with welcome light.

At sight of the dear, familiar nook the tears welled to Hope's eyes. It seemed as if she must surely see Miss Cynthia's form there in the chair. Half blinded by tears Hope stumbled toward the chair and stood leaning against it, her mind full of tender memories. Her hand touched some object—the staff upon which Miss Cynthia had sometimes leaned.

Hope stood as if dreaming, forgetful of her mission until a mournful voice called out: "Give Poll to Hope." She started. It had been Poll's habit to repeat his mistress' words. He had heard her last words, and in the long, lonesome days that followed he had probably repeated them many times, just as he was repeating them now.

"Poll—where are you?" Hope called, her eyes searching among his favorite haunts. She saw him at last, perched on a plant. His crested head was perked to one side; his beady eyes regarded her fixedly. "Come, Poll," she coaxed, holding out her hand. "Come ——" She paused and turned as a footfall sounded near, to see Ferdinand coming toward her, his dark face aglow with eagerness.

"Hope," he said softly, "I did not know you had come until a moment ago. I am glad you are here."

"Thank you," she said as she drew away the hand he had taken. "You are kinder than your sister."

"My sister!" Ferdinand feigned surprise. "Has Malete been cross to you, Hope?"

"She made it plain that I am not

wanted here," Hope replied. "As soon as Poll will come to me, I am going away."

"Going away!" Ferdinand cried. "Indeed you shall not. I have as much say-so here as my sister and I ask you to stay."

"Thank you," Hope said again, "but I prefer not to. Come, Poll."

"Hope——" Ferdinand came a step nearer and there was real sincerity in his tone; real earnestness in his dark eyes as he said: "I love you. I've loved you from the first minute I saw you; and I want you to stay here—as my wife."

Sheer amazement held Hope silent. She had never dreamed of Ferdinand's loving her. The suddenness of his proposal rendered her speechless with surprise.

Taking courage from her silence Ferdinand continued: "I'm not asking you to live with my sister, Hope. She is to be married soon herself. You will be mistress here and I'll see that Malete treats you like a queen, if you'll give me the right to protect you. I'll go at once and tell her of our engagement——"

"Stop!" cried Hope, finding her voice at last to check his flow of speech. "I would not think of doing what you ask."

Ferdinand drew back a pace. As he had feared, his victory was not to be as easily won as his sister had predicted. "Why, Hope," he remonstrated, "you cannot know what you are saying? Where will you go if you leave here? You are penniless——"

"So I have been informed——" Hope's head went up fearlessly—"but I'd rather be penniless and live in the great outdoors than do what you ask. Poll—where are you?"

The parrot had left the plant and was stationed on the back of Miss Cynthia's chair.

Hope's words only served to strengthen Ferdinand's determination. If he failed he would have Malete's anger and scorn to face. He must make another plea. "Hope——"

"Do not speak to me again!" she cried. "I will not listen——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The insulting laugh that followed hard upon her words sounded almost human.

Ferdinand's face flushed with anger as he whirled toward the mocking bird. "Curse you!" he exclaimed. "I'd like to kill you!"

"Like to kill you!" mimicked Poll, and finished with another fiendish laugh.

Ferdinand's fiery temper would stand no more. Seizing the first weapon at hand, Miss Cynthia's staff, he struck at the bird savagely. The blow was well aimed and Poll was knocked to the chair-seat, where he lay, a fluttering heap of color, from which came pitiful shrieks.

"Stop!" cried Hope as Ferdinand raised the cane to strike again. She sprang close to the chair and spread her hands protectingly over the parrot.

For a second it seemed as if the blow would descend despite the outstretched hands, then——

"What's the matter, Hope?" asked a familiar voice.

Hope wheeled quickly to find Stanton Lorimer standing close behind her. In the confusion, neither she nor Ferdinand had heard him enter.

CHAPTER VII.

When Hope did not reply Stanton turned to Ferdinand who stood glowering, the staff tightly grasped in his hand. The two measured glances, but neither spoke. Stanton turned to Hope again.

"I noticed this room was lighted as I came through the grounds, and thought you might be here; so I came right in. I'm not very presentable," he added, with a glance at his mud-spattered clothes "but I got a chance to come on across country just after I'd mailed the note telling you I'd be here in the morning."

"You wrote that to me!" Hope exclaimed, her eyes lighting for the first time since her return to Westover House.

"Certainly," he replied. "Didn't you get it? It should have reached you this afternoon."

Instantly Hope guessed that the note Malete had shown her was her own. But before she could begin an explanation, the door opened and the Spanish girl looked in.

For a moment the latter stood transfixed, anger and amazement pictured on her face. Evidently here was a number she had not considered in her nicely arranged program. What had happened? Had Ferdinand blundered? Where had Stanton come from? And why was Hope daring to look at her like that—as if openly accusing her of something? Malete knew when Hope pointed toward her, then turned to Stanton and said: "You did not write to her, then?"

"No," was the reply; then after he had bowed coldly to Malete, Stanton added: "I have never written her a note of any kind."

It was enough. Malete saw her falsehood and treachery were exposed. The knowledge made her furious.

She seemed to have lost all control of herself as she sprang at Hope. "Take care!" she cried, shaking a threatening fist; "you've scored this time but I'll have you understand I am mistress here, and I command you to go at once!"

"I intend to," Hope replied, shrinking back from the ominously flashing eyes.

"We'll go together," Stanton said hastily, partially comprehending the situation. "Come, Hope."

"I must get Poll first," Hope answered, but when she attempted to raise the parrot it again uttered noisy shrieks of protest. "I'm afraid he's badly hurt," she said in distress.

"Here—let's see," Stanton suddenly clapped one strong hand over the parlot's head, holding it so firmly that it

Seizing the nearest weapon, Ferdinand struck at the bird savagely.

could not use its beak; then his other hand began an examination of Poll's jerking body. "What's wrong with his wing?" he exclaimed presently.

"Is it broken?" Hope asked anxiously.

"There's something——" Stanton parted the shining feathers and peered closer. "Something is bound to the bird's body," he finished.

The others drew nearer and looked on in silence while he endeavored to remove the object. He succeeded at last, and held up to view a fine silver chain to one end of which was attached a flat, metal case such as was used in olden days for holding daguerreotypes. The chain had been wound about Poll's body in such manner as to hold the case beneath his wing.

"It's one of auntie's old picture cases," Hope said as she reached for it. Then with the case in the palm of her hand she gazed thoughtfully at it and murmured: "I wonder whose picture?"

"Open it and see," Stanton suggested.

Her fingers pressed the spring and the case flew open. But no pictured face gazed back at her. The inside, from which the original contents had plainly been removed, was crammed with paper. On top was a smaller piece,

neatly folded; and written on it, in Miss Cynthia's well-remembered hand were the words "To Hope."

Wonderingly the girl unfolded the sheet and read the penciled lines:

MY DEAR HOPE: There are deceitful persons in my house. I have reason to believe there is evil scheming going on. They wish to destroy my will. To keep them from searching for it after I am gone, I pretended to destroy it. But it was only the wrapper, with an old letter inside, that I burned.

The will is here—folded many times and crowded into this small space. I know of no safer place to leave it than in care of Poll. Something tells me you will get it. May God bless you, and let this end in happiness for you. CYNTHIA WESTOVER.

After reading the note Hope handed it to Stanton, who also read it hastily. "The will!" he exclaimed, his eyes on the case.

Malete caught the words and her quick mind grasped their meaning. "The will!" she repeated under her breath as she edged close to Hope. Suddenly her nimble fingers made a dart for it.

"Not so fast," Stanton said coolly, as he caught her wrist in a none too gentle hold. "I am not in possession of all the facts in this case, but from what I gather, there has been enough trickery."

"That will is worthless!" Malete cried, beside herself with rage at having been thwarted in her attempt to seize it. "We are the nearest kin. This place is ours. You've got to go—go—go!" She screamed out the word; stamping her feet and beating her hands like one gone mad.

"What's all this racket?"

Malete ceased her wild actions. In the doorway stood Judge Channing. "Just got here," he explained. "No one answered my ring, so I came on in. What's the commotion—eh?"

Hope briefly told him of the finding of the will on the parrot's body. She also gave him Miss Cynthia's note to read.

There was a twinkle in the old lawyer's eyes as, after scanning the note, he turned to Malete and said: "Fooled you—eh? Pretty sharp of Miss Cynthia, that was."

The words angered Malete anew. "It makes no difference," she declared. "She"—pointing to Hope—"can't have everything. We're the next of kin——"

"Wait a moment, madam," Judge Channing interrupted sternly. "Are you very sure of that last statement? James Westover's children would undoubtedly have a claim to the Westover fortune. But—we lawyers are great fellows to get information. And in these days of telegrams and cablegrams, it doesn't take long to investigate matters. Now, I have learned—concerning yourself and brother——" He was speaking slowly, his keen eyes noting every expression and movement of the two. He saw Ferdinand's crestfallen look as the latter began backing toward the door. Plainly he realized the game was up. But Malete's hope was going to die hard.

"You dare not dispute our story," she cried. "It is true."

"True enough save in one little detail; but a most important one, nevertheless," the judge returned. "You omitted to state that you and your brother are children of James Westover's Spanish wife by a former marriage, and are, therefore, only James Westover's *stepchildren*. That is the charge I make against you. Can you disprove it?"

There was no answer—only a rush of feet as Malete fled from the room calling: "Come on, Ferd; come on!"

But Ferdinand did not follow. Although beaten, he stood like a soldier, gazing fearlessly at his accusers; and when he spoke there was that in his tone which caused the others to listen.

"Don't think hard of Malete," he said. "She can't help going on like that. It's her nerves. They're all gone to pieces.

She worked too hard—on the stage. Malete's always been a good girl. She's not to blame for this business. I'm the one, and whatever punishment's coming I'll take. But let Malete go." His somber eyes looked appealingly from one to the other.

"You admit you are not James Westover's children, then?" the judge asked.

"Only his stepchildren—as you said," Ferdinand answered. "But he was the only father we ever knew, as we were very small when he married our mother. I thought it wouldn't be found out, and so—— It's all my fault."

"Don't you believe that." Malete was back in the room again. Her face looked old and strained. The fire had gone out of her eyes, leaving them dull and miserable. "It's not Ferd's fault," she declared, "but mine and mother's. We conceived the idea of our coming here. We thought we might be able to get something out of Aunt Cynthia—to work her for money, as we did about mother's pretended illness. Of course we hadn't counted on her dying; but when she did and it looked like it would be so easy for us to grasp her fortune—— Well—the thought of riches must have turned my brain. We had always been poor and I wanted——" She paused, turned away, then added drearily: "It's all over now. But don't believe that Ferd was to blame. He was against the scheme from the first. Mother and I made him come. He's always worked hard, too—but what's the use?" she cried passionately. "Do with us quickly what you're going to do." She stood with head bowed, waiting.

The silence that followed was broken by soft footfalls. Then an arm was laid tenderly about Malete's shoulders and a kind voice whispered in her ear: "Malete—you are not going to be punished. Come to your room and rest. You are all unstrung."

The dark head raised swiftly. The dark eyes gazed, unbelieving, into a pair of misty, gray ones. "You!" Malete cried. "You can speak like that to me after all I've done—and meant to do!"

Her nimble fingers made a dart for the will. "Not so fast!" Stanton said coolly.

"Yes," Hope answered. "I am not angry with you, Malete. I'm only sorry for what has happened. Come——"

"No," Malete said firmly. "Not after what I've done. I was jealous of you, Hope Wayne, because you'd always had everything—had known only the sheltered side of life while I had the seamy. I schemed to take your fortune—your lover! I see now what a mad scheme it was. It couldn't help but fail, and it serves me right. The kindest thing you can do for me is to let us go—at once."

"Then you shall," Hope promised. "Barney will take you to the station. There is another train at ten."

There was no acting in Malete's quivering lips and tear-dimmed eyes when she pressed Hope's hand in farewell. "Go back to your mother, dear," Hope whispered, "and take a good, long rest until your nerves are well. I shall not forget you."

To Ferdinand, Hope could offer no word of comfort, particularly as his

dark eyes rested despairingly on her face to the last moment. And his parting words were: "Good-by, Hope. I meant what I said to you."

They were gone.

Judge Channing wiped his eyes, cleared his throat and muttered something about there being "so much good in the worst of us." Then in a louder tone he added: "It was only a guess on my part—about them being stepchildren. From what Cornelia had told me I suspected it might be so, and tried it out with the result we have seen. A stray shot often hits the mark——"

"Good-by—get out!" cut in a raucous voice.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the judge. "There's that bird on the chair-back—smart as you please. He paused; then said: "I'll take a piece of good advice when it's offered and—get out. Good night, Hope. I'll leave you in care of Poll."

"In care of *me,*" Stanton whispered, as his arms went about Hope.

THE UNANSWERABLE

BECAUSE I love you, I can do hard things—
Subordinate myself to others' ways,
Bide cheerful through the dismalest of days,
Be not discouraged when grim fortune brings
A scant return for high adventurings;
Meet with fresh strength each unfamiliar task
As if it were some favor you might ask,
And find thy rest in brave imaginings.

Yet, though my love makes life more bright to bear,
And garners daily joys both gay and sweet,
One sorrow in my inmost heart I bear,
One question endlessly my thoughts repeat:
Why is it that my love for you should be
Able to do all save make you love me!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

CHAPTER XIII—(*Concluded.*)

PARKER duly appeared, consternation in every line of her face.

"Oh, my lady," she burst out, "the emerald can't be found anywhere. Lucy Tredgold made the bed and tidied up the room and hasn't seen a sign of it—and I've looked too!"

"Nonsense," exclaimed Lady Trevillian, throwing down her napkin with a gesture of vexation, "of course it must be found, Parker. You haven't searched very thoroughly. I had it on when I went to bed last night. It *must* be somewhere in the room."

She rose from the table with a word of apology to Haidee, who rose also and followed her upstairs.

Lucy Tredgold, a slender, delicate-looking girl whose white, scared face reflected Parker's agitation, was down on her knees peering beneath the bed. The daughter of one of the tenants on the estate, Lucy was a protégée of Lady Trevillian's and had been given the exclusive charge of her ladyship's rooms.

"Oh, my lady," she whimpered, "I can't find it anywhere."

"Rubbish, Lucy," replied her mistress. "It is somewhere in the room and must be found. Pull the bedclothes off and look again. You saw that I was wearing it last night, didn't you, Haidee?" she said, turning to her guest.

"Why, yes," assented the girl, frantically struggling for composure as the three pairs of eyes turned upon her. "Of course we were all rather excited about your illness, but I'm sure you were wearing the emerald. Let us all search. I'm certain we shall find it."

She was filled with loathing for her own hypocrisy as she spoke. For the moment she lost sight of the high purpose that had prompted her to take the jewel and felt only the shame of guilt; she wondered what criminal could ever survive the torture of an accusing conscience.

The bed was torn apart; blankets, linen and coverlet received a thorough shaking. Every corner and cranny of the room was investigated, but to the increasing mystification of at least three of the searchers, no trace of the jewel could be found. News of its disappearance reached below stairs. Parsons, the elderly white-haired butler, who performed his functions with the dignity and gravity of a judge, appeared on the scene, evidently disposed to take charge of the proceedings.

"The police must be notified at once, my lady," he pronounced, fixing the two maids with a severely judicial eye.

After the manner of her kind, Parker immediately leaped to the conclusion that her honor was impugned and that she had been singled out as the particular object of suspicion.

"Oh, my lady," she cried, bursting into vociferous sobs, "that I should ever

live to see the day when I would be accused of stealing! You can search my trunks, though I'm sure I shall never get over it! Such a disgrace as it is!"

Poor little Lucy stood trembling, her frightened eyes alternately wandering from her mistress' face to the accusing countenance of the portly Parsons.

"Parker, stop howling!" exclaimed Lady Trevillian, stamping her foot. "Of course nobody would think of accusing you, nor Lucy either. The police are certainly not to be called in, Parsons. I won't have them tramping all over my rooms with their great muddy feet, and they are too stupid to be of any use."

"Could it have been a burglar, my lady?" suggested Parsons, ignoring the outraged Abigail. "Your window was open all night, no doubt, and the ivy would be easy to climb."

"That is a suggestion, of course," returned Lady Trevillian thoughtfully; "but nothing in the room was disturbed. You had better have some one look around outside, however. I can't understand, though, why he didn't take the chain, as it is set with diamonds and is quite valuable; but I found that lying on the bed beside me. I'm afraid your burglar theory doesn't hold water, Parsons. I'm still convinced that the jewel is merely mislaid. What do you think, Haidee?"

"I think you are right," replied the girl. "I cannot believe that any one entered the room. I didn't sleep very well last night and I didn't hear a sound."

She forced herself to speak calmly, but she felt that her guilt must be written plainly upon her face for all to see.

"Begging your pardon, miss, but didn't you go into her ladyship's room during the night?" quavered Parsons, peering at Haidee through watery eyes.

Haidee was at a loss to determine whether the remark held a hint of accusation or not, but she replied coolly: "Yes, I did—and so did you, Parker."

The maid subsided into a fresh outburst of weeping.

"Parker, I will shake you if you don't stop that hullabaloo!" Lady Trevillian cried with asperity. "Go to your room and calm yourself. Parsons, have investigations made outside and see if there are any clews. You, Lucy, run along and attend to your duties."

The three servants filed from the room. Lady Trevillian, looking very white, went into the boudoir and threw herself down upon a chaise lounge.

"Haidee, darling," she said, "will you please get my drops? I feel rather shaky. I must lie down for a few minutes or I shall have another attack."

The girl complied with her request and quickly brought the restorative. Lady Trevillian drew her down and kissed her warmly.

"What a miserable day for you, dear child," she said. "I'm so sorry this tiresome thing has occurred, but we must not worry about it. I'm quite sure the emerald will turn up safe and sound. Do go and lie down, dear; you must be awfully fagged after a wretched night and then all this excitement."

Assuring herself that her friend was perfectly comfortable and likely to rest, Haidee withdrew and went toward her own room. As she passed down the long corridor she thought she heard a stifled sob, and paused to listen. Another sob came from behind the curtains of a great oriel window at the end of the corridor.

Her steps made no sound upon the thick carpet as she went forward and drew back the hangings. Crouched upon the low, broad window seat she found Lucy Tredgold, weeping bitterly. As she touched her shoulder and spoke to her the girl lifted a tear-stained, woebegone face, her slender body shaking with the sobs she tried to suppress.

"Why, Lucy," said Haidee, sitting down beside the girl, "what is all this grief about?"

"Oh, miss," gulped Lucy, "it's the emerald. I'm so frightened! I'm afraid they'll think I stole it—and—and—the police will come. I didn't take it, indeed I didn't—oh, dear, what shall I do?"

"But I'm sure you didn't take the emerald, Lucy, and Lady Trevillian would never think of suspecting you."

"I wouldn't take even a brass pin that didn't belong to me, let alone anything that belongs to her ladyship. She's been so kind to me and it would break my heart if she ever thought I'd steal."

The girl buried her face in her drenched handkerchief and sobbed afresh. Haidee took her by both arms and shook her gently.

"Stop crying this minute, Lucy, do you hear?" she said firmly. "Here, take my handkerchief and dry your eyes!"

The little maid immediately took the proferred handkerchief, mopped her streaming eyes and blew her nose. Haidee put a hand beneath the girl's quivering chin and raised the swollen face.

"You heard Lady Trevillian say that she has no doubt of your honesty," she said gravely. "I know that she trusts you and therefore you have nothing to fear, even if there should be a police investigation, which I think very unlikely. We have all been in a great state of excitement, but when Lady Trevillian has rested I am going to suggest that she and I search the room again. We shall be calmer then, and somehow I believe the emerald will turn up. In the meantime, I want you to promise me that you will stop worrying about it. Will you, Lucy?"

"Yes, I'll try to," responded the other, bravely attempting to smile. "Thank you, miss, you're very kind—and I do hope the jewel will be found!"

With a few more reassuring words Haidee left her and went to her own room. She threw herself into a chair by the rain-streaked window, her whole attitude betraying extreme weariness and dejection.

It had all been in vain, her foolhardy

"Why, Lucy," asked Haidee, "what is all this grief about?"

attempt to interfere with the workings of Fate. The Oriental philosophy of her girlhood was now wholly in the ascendant as she reviewed her action of the previous night and its consequences. To have involved the innocent members of the household was something she had not counted upon, and Lucy Tredgold's distress had touched her deeply. She reflected that neither Lady Trevillian's belief in the integrity of her servants, nor the relief Lord Trevillian would undoubtedly feel at the removal of the accursed stone, might avert the necessity of employing the services of a detective, since a thorough investigation would be the only just means of establishing the innocence of the domestics.

She shuddered at the thought of facing a lynx-eyed official with guilt upon her soul, and questioned her own ability to go through the ordeal without betraying herself. There was no doubt about it, the jewel must be restored at the earliest opportunity; and she felt a pang of bitter self-contempt at her lack of courage and ingenuity to carry the thing through to a successful issue.

She wasted little time in introspection, however, but directed her energies toward the problem of restoring the emerald without betraying herself as the agent of its temporary disappearance. She was sick of the whole business and longed to be finished with it.

She had tried to avoid all thought of Jay, but his image would not be banished from her thoughts. What would he think of her if he only knew—Jay, with his uncompromising conception of right and wrong? In trying to take matters into her own hands and find a way out of the tangled maze of circumstances, she had only plunged deeper into the labyrinth.

Some forty minutes later she knocked at Lady Trevillian's door and found her hostess fully awake and about to embark upon another search for the missing jewel.

"You've anticipated my thought, I see," she said. "I was going to suggest that now we are both rested and are feeling calmer, it would be a good idea if we made another search together."

"A capital idea, Haidee!" assented her friend with enthusiasm. "You are quite right; we have all been so confused and excited that I am confident the thing has escaped our eyes. It is really strange, but I have the strongest feeling that the emerald is in the room somewhere."

The search went forward quietly and methodically.

The bed was a massive, heavily carved piece of work that matched the antique furnishing of the rooms. It stood upon four huge clawed feet fitted with smoothly rolling casters. Seizing an auspicious moment when Lady Trevillian's attention was occupied in another corner of the spacious room, Haidee swiftly deposited the jewel beneath the hollowed out base of one of the clawed feet.

She walked to the opposite side of the bed, saying in as casual a tone as she could muster: "We might examine the framework of the bed; the jewel may have lodged in some hollow in the carving."

With eager assent Lady Trevillian abandoned her own field of exploration and came over to the bed. The blood was pounding in Haidee's ears at the success of her stratagem. She felt like an entombed prisoner who at last beholds the light of day.

"If we could only move the bed," she continued, "we might have more success."

As she spoke she gave a strong tug. The massive structure rolled forward several inches. Lady Trevillion cried out.

"Look, Haidee!" she exclaimed, her face transfigured with joy as she pointed to the floor. "Here it is—my beautiful emerald! I *knew* we should find it!"

Jay gazed about the room. Trevillian studied the face of the young man.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lord Trevillian and Jay Temple sat at one of the small tables in a Bond Street tea shop. They had met unexpectedly and Jay, now thoroughly accustomed to that British institution, five o'clock tea, had readily accepted the other's suggestion that they seek refuge from the raw, inclement atmosphere of a December day in London in one of the brightest and most charming spots in the city.

Nevertheless, as they sat together, listening to the strains of a small string band and watching the ever-changing throng of smartly dressed people of both sexes, Jay was conscious of a feeling of constraint, a feeling from which he was never free when in Trevillian's company. For some reason he could not define, he had never taken to the silent, weary-eyed Englishman, though he had no reason upon which to base what seemed to be an instinctive dislike. Trevillian's manner toward him, though never effusive, was always cordial, but at times the younger man had surprised a watchful, speculative expression in the cold gray eyes, an expression that always filled him with a strange, unreasoning anger of which he was afterward ashamed.

"A queer bird," he ruminated. "Seems harmless enough and friendly in his quiet way. Hanged if I know why I don't like him, but he gives me the shivers!"

Trevillian, on the other hand, felt a sincere liking for the young American, though he was alive to the fact that his sentiments were unreciprocated. Knowing what he did, he recognized the instinct that prompted Jay's aversion, and felt only pity and regret for the cause. Pain begets sympathy, when it does not embitter, and the ache in Trevillian's heart had taught him many things new to his experience.

He exerted himself to be agreeable and entertaining. The fund of experience garnered from his extensive travels in almost every quarter of the globe made him, when he chose to take the trouble, a fascinating companion. Yet, in spite of his efforts, the conversation languished. The leaden despair that had fastened on his soul seemed all-pervading—an unseen presence that defeated all attempts to break from the endless circle of dreary reflection.

In spite of himself, Jay's attention wandered, and he impatiently awaited a seasonable opportunity to beat a retreat,

mentally anathemizing the idle moment that had led him into company so little to his taste.

He sat gazing about the room with dreamy eyes. Trevillian had relapsed into silence, and half hidden behind the smoke from his cigarette, studied the face of the young man. Jay, turning abruptly, caught the gaze, and his sudden flush of annoyance as he met the other's eyes was only too apparent.

A contretemps, however, was averted by a sudden irruption into the strained atmosphere. A clear, gay voice hailed the two men, and they rose as Lady Olivia Gowrie, followed by her father, threaded her way among the tables and came toward them.

"Lucky shot to find you here," she cried. "May we join you? I've been shopping all the afternoon and I'm simply dead!"

There was nothing in her appearance to suggest a moribund state. Her eyes were sparkling and her cheeks were flushed with radiant health. She was garbed from head to foot in white, its spotless purity making an excellent foil for her vivid coloring.

Throwing back her furs, she fixed a wicked eye upon Jay.

"What have we here?" she challenged him. "A hard-working American in a tea shop? Fie, Mr. Temple, you're becoming demoralized!"

"When in Rome—you know the rest, Lady Olivia," laughed Jay. "Besides, I like being demoralized. It's in the atmosphere, I think, and I shall miss my afternoon tea when I return to America. The colonel would never allow it, I know. You can't demoralize *him.*"

"Don't you think I could?" she taunted, flashing a sidelong look at him as she fitted a slender cigarette into its holder.

"By Jove, I believe you could demoralize a wooden Indian!" he cried impusively, holding out a lighted match.

Olivia bent forward to the flame, steadying her hand by resting her little finger lightly against his outstretched hand. As she inhaled deeply, she looked straight into his eyes.

"I didn't know you were in town, Olivia," observed Trevillian.

"Oh, I had to come up for the Christmas shopping," she replied. "Horrid bore, but daddy's so old-fashioned and Dickensy about Christmas!"

"My dear!" expostulated her maligned parent, a dapper, mild-featured gentleman whose pale-blue eyes wore a resigned expression, a humorous twist to a somewhat weak mouth redeeming a slightly vapid countenance. It was plain that Olivia inherited her good looks from the distaff side. Lord Kerrisdale's appearance was deceptive and gave no outward indication of the abilities he undoubtedly possessed.

"Darling, you know you are," the girl rattled on. "To please you I wear myself to the bone selecting Christmas gifts for a horde of people I detest. It's the annual farce, a ridiculous affair altogether. I warn you, one of these days I'm going to revolt. I shall buy a lot of delightful things and send them all to myself, with a card reading: 'To the one I love best.'"

"Olivia," gasped her scandalized father, "what will Mr. Temple think of you?"

"He'll think I'm an unusually honest person," she answered coolly. "Whatever my faults may be, hypocrisy is certainly not one of them. Why shouldn't I love myself? I've been led to believe I'm a very charming person."

She leaned back in her chair with a bland smile, her eyes dancing with enjoyment of her own audacity.

Jay laughed outright, Lord Kerrisdale, long inured to his daughter's daring vagaries, joining in his mirth. Trevellian regarded her with a quizzical look.

"Enfant terrible!" he said. "Kerrisdale, I always warned you not to spare

the rod. Don't you wish you had taken my advice?"

"Not a bit of it," Olivia answered for her father. "I'm daddy's never-failing source of amusement. He gets an awful kick out of me. You see, Mr. Temple," she added, turning to Jay, "I speak the American language fluently."

"Like a native," he replied promptly. "Bet I could teach you some new ones, though."

Trevillian, listening to Kerrisdale as the latter launched into a flow of political small talk, watched the two, who kept up a rapid fire of badinage. Olivia's dynamic personality was making itself felt and Jay's keen young face was alight with interest.

Familiarity with the girl's methods soon made it apparent to Trevillian that she was up to her old tricks. She was making a deliberate play for the unsuspecting Jay who for the moment had captured her fancy. As he watched there suddenly flashed into his mind a disturbing possibility—disturbing because it at once spelled relief from anxiety so far as he was concerned, while it would involve misery and heartbreak for Haidee. He loathed himself for the thought as he toyed with it, for he saw in Olivia's fancy for Jay a possibility of breaking off the match with Haidee. He was never free from the fear that she would go down under the strain and confess everything; and he felt that, once separated irrevocably from the man she loved, she would never endure the thought of marriage with another, and the secret would be safe.

Pitying her from the bottom of his heart, he could not bear to think of her suffering. But, like *Macbeth,* he had waded in guilt beyond redemption. The inflexibility of his purpose permitted no scruples, and he needed no argument for justification. His own damnation paled beside the overwhelming necessity for Edith's protection.

"I say," he exclaimed, suddenly arousing from his reverie, "I have a box for the Morocco to-night. Adhemoff is dancing. Shall we make it a party, provided, of course, that you have no other engagements? We could all dine together at the Trocadero."

"Splendid! We'll be delighted. We have nothing else on, have we, daddy?" responded Olivia. "You can come, I hope, Mr. Temple."

Jay signified that his evening was free and accepted the invitation, and the party broke up, arrangements being made to meet later in the evening.

The great stage of the Morocco Theater glowed and pulsated like one vast harmony of color in motion, as the changing scenes of the ballet interpreted the sweeping, throbbing rhythm of the music.

Trevillian and his party arrived a little late, and as they quietly took their seats Jay found himself beside Lady Olivia. At dinner she had been particularly brilliant, keeping the three men in a constant chuckle by her audacious wit and rollicking humor. As they entered the theater her mood had changed, and now she sat quiet, her attention focused on the stage.

Her usual daring expressed itself in her costume. She wore a gown of petunia velvet, the purple shadows in the gleaming fabric bringing out the golden high lights in her coppery hair. The dark platinum sheen of metallic cloth with which the dress was relieved formed a combination suggesting the newest mood of fashion. The gown was extreme in cut and unmarred by a single jewel, and its color accentuated the alabaster perfection of her bare shoulders and shapely back.

As she sat in lovely immobility beside him, Jay, conscious of her nearness, felt his pulses race. Her magnetism seemed to reach out and envelop him in a warm, perfumed mantle. The waves of sound from the orchestra and the

barbaric beauty of the scene before him, as the story of Oriental passion swept on to a tragic climax, combined to produce an utter intoxication of the senses.

The ballet came to a frenzied close and the curtain fell, to rise again and again as the principals responded to the tumultuous applause. In obedience to Lady Olivia's command Jay summoned an attendant, who took from the girl her program upon which she had hastily scribbled a brief message.

They threaded their way down the corridor among groups of theatrical girls.

"Please deliver it to Monsieur Adhemoff's dressing room," she requested, handing the man a piece of money.

She proceeded to devote her attention almost exclusively to Jay, leaning slightly toward him as they chatted. There was a subtle flattery in her attitude, and his admiration for this exquisitely beautiful woman unconsciously assumed a warmer and more personal aspect. He experienced a boyish desire to touch her, to clasp her cool, rounded arm and to press his lips to her firm white shoulder.

From his seat, slightly to the rear of the box, Trevillian was a close observer. He could not bring himself to a definite wish that the possibility suggested by Olivia's obvious interest in Jay might materialize; nevertheless, he resolved that he would make no attempt to avert such a consummation.

The house darkened and the curtain rose upon a sylvan scene, a poem in soft pastel shades bathed in palest yellow moonlight. The quaintly fantastic ballet that followed engendered a feeling of irresponsible gayety, an unreasoning joyousness almost Panlike in its quality, producing a subtle titillation of the senses. This feeling of exhilaration re-

mained with Jay until the final curtain descended.

As they rose from their seats Olivia spoke rapidly in an undertone to the young man, who was placing her wrap about her shoulders; then she turned to the two older men.

"Adhemoff has invited me to take Mr. Temple back stage," she said. "I suppose you two don't care about going."

"Which means that you don't want us," replied Lord Kerrisdale dryly.

"Now, daddy, don't be horrid. You know you hate to be up late, and I'm afaid Lord Trevillian would be bored."

Trevillian did not deny the charge and merely laughed.

"I promised to look in at the club," he volunteered. "What do you say, Kerrisdale, shall we go together?"

The older man agreed, shaking his head at his irrepressible daughter, who regarded her sire with mirthful eyes as she patted him on the shoulder and whispered: "Run along, darling. I shall be perfectly all right."

As they followed the attendant to the regions in the rear of the stage, she slipped her arm into Jay's, exclaiming gayly: "Thank Heaven, now we can have some fun! Daddy's a perfect dear, but I was a bit afraid of Trevillian. He entertains early-Victorian notions regarding chaperonage, and entirely disapproves of the freedom insisted upon by the modern girl."

While he instantly responded to her camaraderie, there flashed across Jay's mind a momentary recollection of his own somewhat old-fashioned notions on the subject; but it vanished as they entered a corridor leading to the dressing rooms. Adhemoff turned from the group with which he was chatting and hurried forward, greeting Olivia with the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

"Ah, milady, zis is a so great pleasure!" he cried, bending over her hand.

She presented Jay, who received a vigorous handclasp from the Russian.

She went to his head like wine. He forgot everything, but that perfect face so near his own.

"I am giving a leetle party at my house to-night," said Adhemoff. "You will both honor me, I hope."

"Charmed!" answered Olivia. "Your parties are always so perfectly delightful. I will wait in Mademoiselle Simova's dressing room. Perhaps you will take care of Mr. Temple?"

"Ah, yes," responded the dancer hospitably. "Will you not come to my dressing room while I make ready, monsieur?"

Jay followed as his host strode down the corridor to his own room, threading his way among the groups of coryphées, theatrical men and visitors, whose conversation filled the air with a polyglot hum.

In spite of a secret and innate prejudice against the professional male dancer, Jay could detect no trace of haughtiness in Boris Adhemoff, whose fame as the supreme exponent of his art was international. He was the embodiment of grace while in the exercise of his profession, and his incredible leaps and gymnastic feats gave the impression of feather-weight lightness. There were times when he almost ceased to be human and appeared to claim kinship with the denizens of a more ethereal region.

His face, perhaps, was attractive in its oval contour, but once the make-up was removed, the heavy beading of the lashes and the violet shading that lent a softness to the eyes, he appeared merely as a pleasant-faced young man with rather refined features, his ready smile revealing a perfect set of strong white teeth. His physique was superb, with the rippling muscles of the athlete, but he was not tall and the overdeveloped legs were clumsy.

"She's perfectly capable of creating a scene," a youth whispered.

Within an incredibly short space of time the Russian emerged from behind the screen that partitioned off the more intimate portion of his big dressing room. All traces of the stage had been removed and he was dressed in the quaint and somewhat bizzare costume he usually affected in the privacy of his home. A blouse of heavy silk was confined at the waist by an antique belt of curious design, and his trousers were tucked into high Russian boots of the softest leather.

As the two men emerged from the dressing room Lady Olivia approached, accompanied by the prima ballerina, to whom Jay was presented. Marishka Simova was tall and angular. There was not an ounce of stage swank about her, but the bony structure of her frame was of such beautiful symmetry and shape that one forgave the absence of feminine curves and softly rounded contours. Her black eyes were slightly oblique and deeply set. Her cheeks were hollow and her mouth was of generous proportions, and her whole countenance lit up with animation when she spoke. Her perfectly proportioned head permitted the severe simplicity of the early-Victorian coiffure, the closely banded hair gleaming like satin.

Several other members of the company joined them and soon they were speeding toward Adhemoff's house in St. John's Wood.

It was a purely bohemian atmosphere in which young Temple found himself, an atmosphere of free-and-easy camaraderie. A man of considerable wealth, Adhemoff had surrounded himself with every luxury, and the colorful beauty of his home bespoke the artist and the connoisseur.

They found a number of guests already assembled, an utter absence of formality being a feature of these gatherings. It was a distinguished company, in which almost every branch of art and letters was notably represented. A fa-

mous pianist was improvising at the beautiful grand, playing a game of musical tag with a violinist of world-wide reputation, whose dark eyes laughed above his instrument as he cleverly followed every change of tempo and key. In one corner a heated discussion was going on concerning the merits and demerits of a certain school of painting, while in another a burly, bearded scientist held the floor.

They were all workers, these people—dreamers perhaps, some of them, but there was nothing in their daily lives that permitted the term to assume the complexion of a reproach, for theirs was a world in which the sham or mediocre had no part. Yet, as the evening progressed, these brilliant people revealed themselves as whole-hearted in play as in work. The ponderous professor exhibited an aptitude for clever fooling that elicited shrieks of laughter from the group around him. Others joined in and the fun became hilarious.

Olivia was in her element, and Jay realized that she was no stranger to these parties. While she was not particularly gifted intellectually, her vital beauty and active wit assured her welcome and established her popularity.

The pianist broke into a dreamy waltz. The magnificent rugs with which the polished floor was strewn were hastily kicked aside, and the great room was soon full of whirling, gliding couples. Jay drew Olivia into his arms, and the two swept into the dance.

They had danced together at Castleton, but there had been no sense of intimacy. Here the atmosphere was different. One felt a wider latitude; certain barriers were down; conventions receded into the background. The man felt like an adventurer into another world.

In this atmosphere Olivia was her true self. The earl's daughter disappeared and in her place appeared the gamin, audacious and provocative, the siren who has tempted men throughout the ages.

She was a tall girl, and as they danced her face was almost on a level with his. He held her closer and she offered no resistance; her eyes, now almost black, gazed into his with an inscrutable expression.

She went to his head like wine and he forgot everything but that perfect face so near his own, the supple body in his arms and the red mouth so temptingly within reach of his own tingling lips.

Adhemoff, who was not dancing, watched the two with a curious expression in his long Slavic eyes. It was an old story to him. He knew Olivia well and had had his own moments of infatuation.

The dance came to an end. Jay reluctantly released the girl, who drew herself from his arms with a low, rippling laugh. His cheeks were flushed and his blue eyes were beseeching.

"Lady Oleevia dances divinely, yes?" Adhemoff's voice sounded at his elbow.

Before Jay could stammer the compliments that came crowding to his lips the dancer spoke again.

"Mees Wells dances beautifully also," he went on smoothly. "I did see her perform once—it was an Oriental dance. Such fire, such grace! I did say to myself that a great *danseuse* was being wasted in that young lady. She has the true spirit, the genius that my art requires."

His words sounded like a thunderclap in the boy's ears; they had the salutary effect of a sudden shower of cold water that quelled the unholy fire in his veins. As he stood dumfounded, immersed in wave after wave of shame, the music commenced again. Adhemoff turned to Olivia. "You will dance this with me?" he asked suavely.

Olivia's white teeth met with a vicious click, then she laughed outright, and as the two whirled away she whispered: "Devil! Spoilsport!"

Haidee's name had broken the spell. Jay was shocked to realize that under the glamour of Olivia's beauty and personality, he had completely forgotten the girl he was soon to marry. The awakening brought with it a sense of depravity. The Puritan instincts that were part of his inheritance sternly arrayed themselves in condemnation of his folly.

Like that of most young men seriously in love, Jay's sense of humor had retired into temporary obscurity, and he took himself and his sins very seriously. At the best he felt himself totally unworthy of the girl who was to trust her happiness to him, and now he was horrified at the revelation of his own weakness.

Plunged into misery and gloom, he longed to be away and debated how he could make his escape. He would have left the house immediately, but he felt a certain sense of responsibility toward Olivia, who evidently had no intention of going home for some time to come.

He wandered away into one of the other rooms and joined a group of non-dancing men. They were all good talkers, men of intellectual versatility, and the likable young American was cordially welcomed into the circle. Subject after subject was brought into discussion, and as he listened, sometimes joining in, Jay's nerves quietened and he regained his perspective. It was good man-talk and just what he needed.

Time passed swiftly. Outside the gray dawn was breaking over the city. The talk slackened and watches were consulted by their yawning owners, and soon the group broke up. Jay rose with the others and there was a grim expression on his face as he went in search of Olivia.

He found her the center, as usual, of a circle of male admirers. As he made his way to her side she regarded him with a slight frown.

"Don't you think it is time we were going, Lady Olivia? Look at the hour!" he said, holding out his wrist and presenting the dial of his watch for her inspection.

"Oh, there's lots of time yet," she replied indifferently.

"Sorry, but I have to be at the office by ten this morning," he insisted. "I must see you safely home, you know."

"Really, Mr. Temple," she drawled insolently, "if you want to go home why don't you go? I'm not ready, so please don't wait for me."

She coolly turned her back on him.

Jay's eyes snapped. His temporary infatuation had entirely evaporated and he felt a strong desire to box her ears.

The others were hugely delighted with the situation, for a battle of wills seemed imminent.

"I'll stake my money on Livvy," whispered a youth in the background, nudging his neighbor. "She's perfectly capable of creating a scene and she'll get her own way if the heavens fall. I don't envy that chap."

The prophesy seemed likely to be a true one, for Olivia had drawn herself up haughtily and had turned upon young Temple with flashing eyes. Intervention, however, came from another quarter. Mademoiselle Simova, swathed in sables, appeared upon the scene.

"Lady Oleevia," she called out sweetly, "will you not let me drive you home, and Monsieur Temple also? I theenk it is time we go. Boris is tired, and so am I, and we have a terreebly strenuous rehearsal this afternoon."

Adhemoff appeared at her elbow, ostentatiously stifling a yawn. It was a hint that could not be ignored, and Olivia had no choice but to give way.

She maintained an attitude of icy aloofness as the three drove homeward in Mademoiselle Simova's luxuriously appointed limousine. The dancer, with a wicked twinkle in her black eyes, insisted that Jay occupy the seat between herself and Olivia, and she carried on a lively conversation with him.

Olivia ignored him completely and made it very clear that she had lost all interest in him. It did not sweeten her temper, however, when he met her indifference with equal unconcern and devoted himself, after an unsuccessful attempt to make the conversation general, to the vivacious Marishka.

The young man was dropped at his chambers. Mademoiselle Simova was cordiality itself in her leave taking, but Olivia vouchsafed only a cool nod.

"Ah, sooch a charming boy," cooed the dancer as they drove away.

"Awful young prig!" snapped Olivia.

Marishka laughed.

After a cold tub Jay, with the resilience of youth, found himself able to review the events of the evening from a more philosophical standpoint. Clad in a comfortable lounging robe, he filled his favorite pipe and drew up the window shades; he sat down to watch the changing opalescent tints of the dawn-filled sky, for he felt no desire for sleep.

He had lost the feeling of guilt, and impatiently felt that he had acted like a mawkish schoolboy detected in his first indiscretion. The experience had not been without value. It had helped to mature him, and he knew that never again would Olivia be able to throw him off his balance.

Dismissing her from his mind, his thoughts turned to Haidee, whose sterling worth and human tenderness were the attributes to a beauty less extravagant and showy, perhaps, than that possessed by Olivia, yet undubitably more poignant and appealing. As he sat there musing, his heart yearning with devotion and humble gratitude for the wonderful gift of her love, he felt a sudden conviction of her greatness of heart and her sincerity. She would always understand. He could go to her with his problems knowing that she would never fail him. There was infinite peace in the thought, and his heart went out in a fervent prayer that he might prove worthy of the happiness that was to be his.

He rose and went over to the writing desk that stood by the window in a corner of the room, and commenced his daily letter to Haidee. Never had his pen seemed so fluent as he poured out his heart to her. Before him on the desk stood a large portrait of his mother, a sweet-faced woman clad in a gown of Quaker simplicity, whose features, a feminine version of his own, bore the stamp of a serene, well-poised mind and true nobility of character.

I have just been looking at my mother's picture. How I wish she could have lived to know you! She would have loved you, Haidee. We Temples have always been proud of our women and we have been singularly blessed in that respect, for the women of our family for generations have possessed the finest qualities of their sex. You cannot conceive how proud I am to have won so flawless a jewel as your dear self to adorn the good old name. My mother would have blessed my choice. Indeed, I feel that she does know and is happy. I worshiped her and I know of no one so worthy to fill her place. I love you, dear.

CHAPTER XV.

It seemed to Haidee that the days rushed by with whirlwind speed, every hour drawing her closer to the event that outwardly appeared the culminating happiness of her life, though to the girl's own secret knowledge it could mean only bitterness and fear, perhaps irreparable disaster.

After the recovery of the emerald she had returned to Powys Manor tingling with shame and self-loathing at the part she had played in that grim farce. Coupled with the loss of her own self-esteem was the harrassing longing to know just what the Penarvon household thought about the matter. From Lady Trevillian she knew she had nothing to fear, and for Trevillian's opinion she cared nothing. In the servants' hall,

however, she knew the event would be discussed from every angle.

Logically, she herself had been as open to suspicion as Parker or Lucy Tredgold, and Parker, in virtuous defense of her own integrity, was not likely to overlook any possibility of unloading the responsibility upon the shoulders of another, though her opinions might find expression merely in guarded hints. A guilty conscience reads suspicion in every eye, and Haidee felt that her cup of degradation was full and overflowing.

To make matters worse, the excitement consequent to the temporary loss of her beloved jewel had had an unfortunate effect upon Lady Trevilian's physical condition. The doctors had been peremptory in ordering her removal to a less exacting climate and a complete retirement from all social activities, and since Edith was insistent upon being present at Haidee's wedding, the date of that function had been advanced and the marriage was to take place immediately after Christmas.

Trevillian's own feelings in the matter were far from enviable. He undoubtedly pitied the girl upon whose innocent shoulders the burden of guilt must fall, yet his singleness of purpose permitted no thought of compromise or yielding. He stood prepared to sacrifice the whole world to save the woman he worshiped one pang of suffering. He had lived in a mental hell so long, he grimly told himself, that custom had blunted the sting of conscience. The half-formulated hopes he had entertained with regard to Jay and Olivia assured him of that, but he realized that no intervention could be expected from that quarter. The approaching marriage seemed inevitable.

Knowing from experience the girl's courage when driven to the point of desperation, and fully aware of her fear and aversion for the emerald, he was not slow in suspecting her share in the recent episode, though he kept his opinion to himself. He did not blame her; in fact, he would not have been sorry if her efforts had met with success. But he cursed the havoc which the excitement had wrought in Edith.

Haidee's Oriental training stood her in good stead during this critical period; it enabled her to control herself when in the presence of the others, and to conceal her mental suffering beneath a calm and impassive demeanor. Whatever signs of inward agitation forced themselves to the surface escaped notice in the bustle and excitement of wedding preparations.

Her aunt, knowing her deeply emotional nature, attributed her quietness and paleness to the natural awe and seriousness of a girl approaching the most vital event of her life.

Mrs. Brooke, blissfully ignorant of any element of tragedy, was extremely happy in contemplating the felicitous culmination of the romance that had developed beneath her sympathetic eyes. She was entirely in her element in the supervision of the various preparations for the ceremony, and in spite of Haidee's repeated protestations, plunged into an orgy of shopping, with the colonel's ready consent, and gathered together a lavish trousseau.

The colonel impressively assured his niece that she could not have pleased him better in her choice of a husband, for he had come to regard Jay Temple as a son, and had already planned a brilliant future for the young man. At the same time, as he privately expressed himself to his wife, "I'll be darned glad when all this fuss is over and we can settle down to normal again!"

"Now, Frank," expostulated Mrs. Brooke, "don't be an old fogy. This is the crowning event in the young folk's lives. You were a young bridegroom yourself once—have you forgotten?"

The "old fogy" pinched his wife's still blooming cheek, then crushed her in a bearlike hug.

"Forgotten? I should say not!" he boomed, stooping to kiss her. "Hang me if you ain't just as pretty and youthful now, Allie, as you were the day I married you."

"Spooning again!" came a gay voice from the doorway, as Jay entered the room just in time to witness the scene. "Colonel, I'm surprised at you!"

"Hrrmph!" snorted the colonel, his eyes twinkling beneath their bristling brows. "You young rascal, you're just the very person I was looking for. Come, let's get to work. Too much loafing these days!"

"Colonel, how mean of you to work the poor boy so hard," cried Mrs. Brooke.

"Yes, sir," laughed the "poor boy," "I noticed that you were *looking for me!*"

The wedding was to be a quiet one and was to take place in the old parish church in the village of Penarvon, a hoary edifice of simple architecture, whose thick stone walls and blackened woodwork attested to its antiquity. It suited Haidee's morbid fancy to reflect upon the carven effigies of bygone Trevillians whose stony eyes would witness the ceremony that was at once a sacrilege and a dishonor to their ancient name. She felt that if they could speak they would cry out upon her and upon the man whose pride and cowardice had drawn them both into the net of deceit.

The honeymoon was to be of the briefest, for Jay could not long be spared from his duties. Colonel and Mrs. Brooke were to motor up to London after the ceremony, leaving the young couple in possession of the Manor.

A limited number of invitations had been sent out and the wedding presents were pouring in thick and fast. Their Graces of Gaunt were to be among the guests and had been generous in their offering. Each new and costly token of good will, hailed with enthusiasm by her aunt, seemed to Haidee one more load to the burden that was slowly crushing her, like stones heaped upon the breast of a prisoner in the barbarous ages.

It lacked a few days to Christmas when the curtain rose on the last act of this strange drama of circumstance.

Mrs. Brooke was to dine at Penarvon Castle, in company with other members of the local gentry. Haidee had begged off on the plea that Jay was expected down from London on a flying visit and that she had many important matters to discuss with him.

Trevillian had protested in vain against this and all other social engagements for Edith, quoting the doctor's warning and injunctions, but he had wrung from her a solemn promise that immediately after the wedding she would submit to his wishes.

"Be patient just a little longer, darling," she coaxed, "and I give you my word of honor I'll be good and do all you tell me to. We'll go away somewhere and have a long honeymoon together, just you and I."

Trevillian sighed and gave in.

Edith stood before a long mirror in her dressing room while her maid put the finishing touches to her toilet. She wore a gown of shimmering peacock-blue velvet and cloth of gold, with long winglike sleeves of net. Her hair was wound closely about her head, like a cap of burnished gold, its heavy coils held in place by large emerald-studded pins.

"Really, Parker," she remarked ruefully, as she surveyed herself in the glass, "if I get much thinner I shall have to stop wearing low-necked gowns. I'm beginning to look like a positive clothes rack!"

"If you would only rest more, my lady," ventured the maid.

"Rest!" exclaimed her mistress impatiently. "Good heavens, Parker, I'm tired of having that word dinned into my ears continually!"

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure, my lady," replied the woman in a hurt tone.

As he gazed into its baleful depths, a ghastly grayness crept across his face.

"There now, Parker, I'm sorry I was cross," returned Lady Trevillian penitently. "I know your intentions were of the best. Perhaps you'll be happy when I tell you that I'm going to take every one's advice directly after Miss Wells is married. Now, aren't you pleased to hear that?"

"Indeed I am, my lady."

Edith went over to the dressing table and took up the great emerald. She stood fondly looking at it, almost gloating over its beauty as it lay flashing in the pink palm of her hand.

"Won't you wear your pearls to-night, my lady?" coaxed Parker, whose aversion for "that there wicked-looking stone" had not lessened since the late episode of its loss.

"No," replied her mistress willfully. "I'll wear my darling emerald."

As she spoke she lifted it to her lips. But it never reached them, for her hand closed tightly upon the jewel and suddenly she gasped for breath. A dreadful pallor overspread her face and she swayed.

The maid caught her in her arms and gently eased her into a chair. Terrified, she rushed to the door of Trevillian's dressing room and knocked wildly. The valet opened the door.

"His lordship!" gasped the woman. "Tell him to come quickly—my lady is ill!"

Without waiting for a reply she ran back to her mistress.

Trevillian had heard her cry. Brushing the man aside he rushed into his wife's room. Edith sat crumpled up in the chair, her eyes closed. He picked her up in his arms and carried her to the chaise lounge.

She was almost gone, but as he laid her gently down she opened her eyes, and with a smile of infinite sweetness gazed into his face. Then her head fell back.

He bent over her for a few moments, then rose to his feet and gazed down at her with a dazed, incredulous stare.

"She's—dead!" he said in a dull, toneless voice.

Parker broke into a storm of sobs, and Trevillian's man, his eyes swimming with tears, took her by the arm and led her away.

"I'll send for the doctor, my lord," he said, and they left him alone with the dead.

An icy chill settled down upon his heart and brain, numbing all sensation and stupefying his faculties. Mechanically he straightened the body of the dead woman and crossed her hands upon her bosom. As he did so his fingers became entangled in the slender diamond-studded chain dangling from the hand that still clutched the jewel. He opened the hand and took from it the emerald.

As he gazed into its baleful depths a ghastly grayness slowly crept across his face. Pictured in the green heart of the emerald he saw the ruined shrine of Jatpur and the gaping breast of the idol.

He nodded as if in sudden comprehension.

"Shiva—you win!" he muttered.

A gleam of purpose flashed into his eyes. He turned and left the room, closing the door gently behind him.

Down the stairs and through the great vaulted hall he passed, with long even steps, neither seeing nor hearing the weeping servants. Down the broad stone steps and across the lawns he went, his pace quickening, never faltering. He reached the boundaries of the home park and struck into a rough road across the moor. He was almost running now, like a man spurred on by devils. At length he left the road, and plowed and stumbled through the rough heather. He came to a halt upon the brink of a cliff that overhung the ocean.

The tide was coming in, dashing with heavy thuds upon the rocks below, boiling in the pools, racing and sucking in the crevices. Broad bands of moonlight lay upon the sea, like a shining path leading into the unknown.

His arm high above his head, Trevillian flung the emerald into the water. As it left his hand, describing a gleaming arc as it caught the moonbeams, the ground benath his feet gave way.

There was a soft, sliding sound of falling earth and a rattle of gravel and loose stones; but ere his body struck the rocks below, a mighty wave rose to receive him and silently closed over him as he disappeared from sight.

The ground beneath his feet gave way. There was a sliding sound of earth; then the water closed over him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Haidee had reached the limit of her endurance. With her wedding day drawing near with appalling rapidity, she had formed a resolution to make one more desperate effort to straighten out the tangle in which she had become involved. There seemed to be only one course left open—to tell the truth. She realized that she would rather lose Jay forever than inflict so great a wrong upon him.

Jay's reference to the traditional pride of his family in the integrity of its womanhood, more particularly his conviction that his beloved mother knew of his happiness and shared it, filled the girl with something like terror. It seemed as though the dead woman hovered near, forbidding her to wrong her son, urging her to make the sacrifice. *"I worshiped her and know of no one so worthy as you to fill her place."* The words had branded themselves upon her memory and only she understood the scorching irony of them.

During these terrible days her love for Jay had grown almost beyond control, filling her with an aching yearning almost primitive in its intensity. Though perhaps she did not realize it, she was animated by the same complete self-surrender, the same passionate desire to serve, that had led her mother to for-

sake the shelter of a luxurious home in order to follow her mate into the unknown East, where she might minister to his comfort and share his labors.

Thus it was, while Death stalked abroad at Penarvon, a tragedy of another kind was in the making at Powys Manor.

The prospective tête-à-tête with her lover seemed to provide Haidee with an opportunity to carry out her determination. Her feelings in the matter were those of one unalterably resolved upon suicide. She had no hope for the outcome, for she knew she was about to deal the deathblow to her happiness.

Yet she loved Jay none the less because she was convinced that he would never understand. His clean-cut ideals would never tolerate the accumulated deception of the past year, and his pride would receive a blow that would doubtless kill his love and fill him with bitterness, perhaps aversion.

He was late in arriving. Unable to stand the suspense of waiting, Haidee at last ordered dinner to be served, and had just finished a miserable pretense of dining when the familiar toot of his automobile horn heralded his approach. A few minutes later he burst into the room.

"Sorry I'm late, sweetheart. Had an awful time getting away!" he panted, gathering her into his arms as she rose from the table. "I'm glad you didn't wait for me!"

He was in boyishly high spirits, his eyes sparkling and his cheeks reddened by the crisp night air.

"Whew, I'm hungry!" he cried. "I'll go and scrub. Do you mind if I don't change? Hope there's lots to eat—I'm simply ravenous!"

"Run along, greedy boy—and hurry!" answered Haidee, suddenly calm.

"Back in a jiffy!" He dashed out of the room and tore upstairs, taking two and three steps at a time like a schoolboy.

Haidee gave orders, and within a very short space of time Jay reappeared and seated himself at the table. He justified his own estimation of his appetite, and as he ate he regaled her with a humorous account of his mad ride across the country, bubbling over with glee as he told of hairbreadth escapes from sundry police officers who had pursued him.

"I'm wanted for speeding in five counties," he chuckled. "If you don't marry me soon I'll land in jail yet."

He lingered over the meal, chattering away with the light-hearted gayety of a young man secure in the knowledge of his happiness, and Haidee's heart sank as she thought of the blow she must deal him; she saw that her task would be even harder that she had realized.

Jay's exuberance relieved her of the necessity for sustaining the conversation. Beneath her calm exterior she was conscious of a tingling sensation that pervaded her whole body, as though every separate nerve was tingling and vibrating in jangling inharmony with its fellows. Like a condemned felon eager for the termination of his torture, she was consumed with a fever of impatience to be done with her hateful task.

After what seemed an interminable period, Jay rose from the table. Haidee rose also and together they went into the library. With a sigh of content the man flung himself into a deep armchair before the blazing fire, but Haidee, breaking away from his embrace, wandered restlessly about the room, her agitation increasing with every passing moment. His joyous mood balked her intentions. How could she break in upon his gayety with such a tale? Would he never be serious? She flinched with every reference to their imminent happiness that fell from his lips.

"What a restless girl it is to-night!" he cried suddenly, as her nervousness at length impressed itself upon his observation. "Stop prowling about the

room. Come over here and let us have a cozy talk. Tell me what you've been doing with yourself since I saw you last."

He spoke with the sweet imperiousness of the lover, but though she obeyed his command she evaded his outstretched arms, and ignoring his inviting gesture to take her place upon his knee, she dropped to the hearthrug by his side.

"I think I'm a little crazy to-night," he laughed, as he caressed her hair. "Crazy with happiness, Haidee, for I'm the luckiest fellow in the whole world. To think that very soon you'll be mine—my very own, to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live! It seems like a wonderful dream. I can't imagine what I've ever done to deserve such great fortune. I tell you, Haidee, it makes a fellow feel very humble, such happiness as this—and very unworthy."

"Unworthy! Oh, Jay, my love—if I were only half as worthy!"

There was a note of agony in her cry as the beautiful head bowed itself upon his knee.

"Why, Haidee—sweetheart!" His voice was full of bewilderment. He stooped and would have gathered her to his heart, but she resisted him and drew away.

"Don't mind me, Jay," she said, with a half-hysterical laugh. "I think I'm a bit crazy, too. I'm tired—and nervous, I guess."

Seeing the bewilderment still in his expression, she regained her self-control with a supreme effort, and when again she spoke her voice assumed a more tranquil tone.

"I'd like to tell you something about my life in India," she began.

"Bully!" he cried with enthusiasm. "I've often wished you'd tell me about it. You see, I'm interested in everything concerning you."

"I'd better start at the beginning and tell you what I remember of my childhood," she said.

Jay settled back to listen, while Haidee, sinking back on her heels, unconsciously assumed an Oriental attitude and gazed into the heart of the fire as she began her story, ignorant of the fact that at that very moment death had removed every obstacle that barred her union with the man whose happiness she was about to destroy.

In simple, graphic language she told him of her earliest impressions, of the dark-skinned woman who had been the only mother she had ever known and of her own bitter grief and loss when death claimed that tender foster mother. Her voice unconsciously took on a monotonous, even tone as she went on to speak of the harsh and unsympathetic widowed sister of Ali Singh, who assumed control of the weaver's household after the death of Amah. These were not happy memories. She passed over them quickly and proceeded to outline the events that led up to the time of her meeting with Trevillian.

She paused and sat silent for a few seconds, lost in recollection; but as she again opened her lips to speak, Jay's arm suddenly slid from the arm of the chair upon which it had been resting and hung limply over the side. Haidee turned quickly. With a half-strangled cry she sprang to her feet and gazed down at him, scarce believing the evidence of her own eyes. He was fast asleep.

She had failed again. Fate still conspired to chain her to her secret.

Suddenly she burst into peal after peal of uncontrollable laughter, terrible laughter in which there was no vestige of humor. Jay's eyes opened at the sound, and he sprang to his feet.

"Good heavens, of all the consummate idiots!" he cried, overwhelmed with remorse. "How can you ever forgive me? I *was* interested, really I was. You were telling me how they tried to force you to marry that beastly old Hindu—and then—I—I must have dozed off!"

Haidee shook and gasped with hysteria while he continued to stammer in abject apology, conscious that his excuses sounded absurd and inadequate.

" 'Pon my word, I don't know what to say! The long drive in the night air—the dinner and then the fire, all proved a combination too much for me, I guess. Please—please forgive me."

She was sobbing now, and Jay's penitence turned to alarm as he tried to quiet her.

"Haidee — don't!" he implored. "Why, you're all unstrung. Don't laugh like that, dearest—and you're crying, too! You'll be ill. Haidee, for Heaven's sake, stop it!"

"What a dreadful noise you two are making! Hello, Jay, what is the matter with Haidee?"

The man turned with an expression of thankfulness at the sound of Mrs. Brooke's voice.

"Good Lord, Aunt Allie," he cried, "I'm glad you've come! I was idiot enough to go to sleep while Haidee was talking—and I can't make her stop laughing. She seems to be hysterical."

Mrs. Brooke took the almost exhausted girl by the shoulders in a grasp more firm than gentle and shook her slightly.

"Stop this nonsense at once, Haidee," she commanded sternly. "Are you out of your senses? Don't you see how you are distressing Jay?"

Her words seemed to have the desired effect upon the girl who, now utterly spent and ashy white, ceased her dreadful mirth. As her aunt's hands released their grasp she turned away and gropingly sought the support of a high-backed chair, against which she leaned weakly, putting aside Jay's outstretched arm.

The elder woman's face was white and drawn and she seemed to be laboring under suppressed agitation.

"Forgive me if I seem harsh, my child," she said, sinking into a chair as she spoke and throwing back her wrap. "I've just been through a most distressing experience and have had about all I can stand. I bring sad news. Poor Edith died suddenly to-night, and both Trevillian and the emerald have disappeared."

She cried out in alarm as Haidee, without a sound, sank to the floor in a dead faint.

It was considerably more than an hour later when Mrs. Brooke sought Jay in the library. Haidee had been revived and put to bed, and had fallen into the deep sleep of exhaustion.

"How is she?" queried the man anxiously, as he solicitously cared for the distracted lady's comfort.

"Sleeping soundly," replied Mrs. Brooke. "She seems to be utterly worn out. What was it all about, Jay?"

He seated himself on the hearth rug at her feet and somewhat shamefacedly retailed the history of the evening.

"I can't tell you how ashamed I am," he confessed, worried lines deepening between his eyes. "It was an unspeakable way to behave, but the drowsiness took me off my guard. This is the first time she has volunteered to tell me anything about her past life—and to think I couldn't keep awake!"

"You poor boy, don't blame yourself so severely for what was certainly no fault of your own. You must have been fagged out after a wild John Gilpin ride like that, and the colonel has been overworking you shamefully of late. Don't worry, son, Haidee will forgive you. She has too much sense not to understand."

"But she was positively hysterical," he argued. "Girls are certainly an enigma. I don't believe I'll ever understand them."

"Don't ever expect to, my boy," was the reply. "Cleverer men than you have failed in the task. We women would cease to attract if men understood us.

In our unexpectedness lies the secret of our charm."

"Perhaps you're right," replied Jay, gallantly kissing her small bejeweled hands. "There's no doubt about the charm, whatever the cause."

Mrs. Brooke smiled affectionately, but she was in no mood for badinage. In answer to Jay's questioning she told of the confusion that greeted her arrival at Penarvon Castle. She had found several of the dinner guests, early arrivals, grouped together in the great hall, questioning the grief-stricken old butler in awed undertones. The tears were rolling down Parsons' wrinkled old face as he tried to tell what had happened. The women of the party soon afterward returned to their homes while the men joined in the search for Trevillian.

"Parker declared that the emerald was in Edith's hand when she died, but it had disappeared when they took Doctor Farrell up to her. Of course he could do nothing, for Edith had been dead some time when he arrived. They say Trevillian looked like a dead man when he left the house. His face was terrible and the servants were afraid to speak to him as he passed through the hall. It was no secret that he disliked the emerald, though nobody knows why, and he must have taken it away. It's all so mysterious and terrible! Poor Haidee, Edith was her dearest friend. I'm afraid the wedding will have to be postponed, Jay."

The day had advanced almost to noon when Haidee awakened the following morning. She had slept profoundly and now as she lay thinking there came to her the memory of that other awakening, many years ago, in the dak-bungalow at Bhoondi. She saw herself, a desolate child, abandoned by the man upon whom all her hopes had been centered.

He had paid a bitter price for his treachery, and in her heart she found no trace of anger or resentment, only pity. Nor could she grieve for the gentle woman whose precarious happiness had so long hung in the balance. Edith Trevillian's fate was not an unhappy one. Death was kinder than life might ultimately have proved.

There came a gentle tap on the door and Mrs. Brooke entered.

"How are you feeling, darling?" asked the older woman fondly, as she kissed the girl.

"I'm quite all right, dearest, and ashamed of the way I behaved last night," answered Haidee, returning the caress. "Tell me what happened at Penarvon, auntie—about Edith, I mean."

"Promise me that you won't fret, dear heart."

"I'm not fretting, auntie. I was not brought up to fear death," was the calm reply.

Mrs. Brooke proceeded to recount the tragic events of the previous evening, but had scarcely reached the end of her story when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," called out Haidee.

The door opened and Haidee's maid entered in a state of suppressed excitement.

"Oh, ma'am," cried the girl, "I think they've found Lord Trevillian!"

Haidee sprang from the bed and threw on a negligee, tossing back the heavy braid that lay over her shoulder. The two ladies followed the girl into the wide corridor and to a window that afforded an extensive view of the moors, with a glimpse of the ocean beyond.

Along a white strip of road in the distance a little cavalcade was passing—men walking slowly, bearing among them a heavy burden.

There was something funereal in the very aspect of those distant figures, moving slowly beneath a gray sky across the brown expanse of the solemn, brooding moorland. One could almost hear

the steady crunch, crunch of their feet as they tramped in silence along the gravel road.

Mrs. Brooke opened the casement and questioned a gardener who was working on the lawn below.

"Yes, ma'am," said the man, "they found 'is lordship on the beach where the tide had left 'im. They've been lookin' for 'im all night."

"Ask him about the emerald," prompted Haidee quickly.

Mrs. Brooke put the question.

"Wasn't no trace o' the emerald," replied the man. "I seed it once; 'twere a rare piece o' jewelry!"

The man turned to his work.

Mrs. Brooke closed the window, and followed by the inquisitive maid, went downstairs, leaving Haidee alone at the window.

Watching the distant cavalcade with an inscrutable expression she murmured, as it disappeared beyond the range of vision: "The vengeance of Shiva!"

She became suddenly aware that Jay had stolen up behind her. He laid his hand over hers as he bent above her. Through a rift in the gray clouds the sun appeared, sending a warm shaft of light through the window, and its radiance was reflected in her face as she turned to him.

The End

"SUNDERED HEARTS"

GEORGETTE MACMILLAN'S
NEW NOVELETTE WILL APPEAR
IN LOVE STORY MAGAZINE
DURING JULY

The Heart of a Lily

By Clara Sands Kingsley

ONE summer day Madame Estelle, proprietress of the Cuisine Bergere upon the Old Shell Road beyond New Orleans, sat scowling at a letter in her fat hands.

Old Mammy Chloe, the chore woman, saw the frown and walked tiptoe by to tell the others in the kitchen. At once the singing and the laughter of the other servants ceased. When Madame Estelle frowned her world trembled and hid itself away out of sight.

A huge fat woman was Madame Estelle, with hard, piglike black eyes sunk deep in her face, with pendant jowls veined with tiny scarlet threads that told of too much food and too little exercise.

Her mouth was like a thin crooked scar as she sat in the center of her house, weaving her affairs like a great spider in its web. And many were the flies that fell into her meshes.

The Cuisine Bergere was known far and wide for the excellence of its gumbo, its browned busters and its sauce creole. The hospitality of the great rambling old inn was prodigal and gay and was famed afar.

A road house de luxe, was the Cuisine Bergere. The inn was a paying proposition to the astute Madame Estelle and her smooth and handsome partner known everywhere as Monsieur Vic.

Yet Madame Estelle sat in her brick-paved little courtyard with the fretted shadows of the jasmine vine weaving like fine old lace about her. She scowled into the sunshine and the fragrant air.

The letter was a very short one, on plain paper in plain neat writing and it was headed Convent of the Holy Maid, which is a high-class and fashionable school. It informed Madame Estelle that since the lamentable failure of the Bank de Poiters to which had been intrusted all her daughter Christine's fortune, the tuition payments for that daughter as hitherto arranged by the girl's late father, were no longer possible. It asked madame if she would prefer to make those payments herself or should she wish, now that the child was older, to have her at home?

It concluded with genuinely affectionate references to the daughter; her gentleness and piety and with the hope that she would remain to complete her education at the school. It closed with

a generous offer to reduce the said tuition fees to a practically nominal sum.

A roadside inn like the Cuisine Bergere was inconceivable to the instructors, and it was unknown to the aged lawyer in France who had handled the girl's affairs for her dead father. To all concerned it seemed that the best place for a child must surely be with her mother. But Madame Estelle's feelings as she sat scowling with the letter in her fat fingers relaxed upon her lap, staring into the past were not the feelings of a mother. Old memories rose before her. Hate boiled up like a black brew in her heart. Her mouth drew into an even uglier line and her breath whistled in her nostrils and pinched them with anger. She was that fury which outstrips hell—a woman scorned and now for the first time after many years she saw her chance to repay that scorn. True he was dead, the father of this child of Madame Estelle's, the high-bred, proud French youth who had fallen under the evil spell of her own youth and beauty. He had told her quietly and plainly that he did not love her and had taken her child away to an exclusive school. Then he blew out his brains.

He was dead, but his child lived. She was in Madame Estelle's power. She folded the letter grimly and thrust it in her patchouli-scented bosom and waddled toward the kitchen, smiling a smile more deadly than her frown.

The girl, Christine de la Bruyere, looked about the crowded railroad station for the mother she had never seen. She was fourteen, a slender, fragile, blond-haired child with wide brown eyes from which like Rosetti's maid "the look of wonder was not yet quite gone." Her world had been exclusively the world of the cloistered convent school, a world of simple tasks and simple joys, of quiet sheltered garden and ordered schoolroom. A world to which the passions and the actualities of life filtered but dimly, as the sunlight filtered through the stained-glass chapel windows. Her dreams were the dreams of innocence, peopled by saints and, vaguely, by a glorious Galahad in silver armor who would appear some day and love her and cherish her forever. She saw the fat woman with the hard dark eyes staring at her. Finally the woman approached.

"You are like your father," Madame Estelle said brusquely without further introduction.

"My mother sent you?" said the girl, her heart suddenly sinking before the hard, malignant gaze.

"Who do you think I am?" Madame Estelle stated rather than asked. The girl took her literally.

"She could not come herself so she sent you—the maid?" she asked innocently.

A purplish red suffused madame's heavy cheeks but she merely remarked. "I am your mother," and gave a curt command to follow.

In the car driven by an obsequious negro Christine tried to reconcile herself to the facts that were so opposed to all her imaginings. She had imagined a mother who was a compound of the prettiest of the girls' mothers who came on Sundays to visit their daughters at the Convent, and the picture of her favorite saint. Her heart sank and every instinct warned her at sight of this heavy, harsh-faced, malignant-eyed woman who had offered her not one sign of affection or welcome, but sat eying her with an evil smile upon her thin lips.

"You are like your father," Madame Estelle repeated when they arrived at the inn. Christine detected the condemnation that underlay the statement. She flared up in defense of the being whom she had never seen but whom the aged lawyer, who had written to

her regularly once a month through all the years, had built up for her as an ideal of chivalry and tenderness.

"My father was a very great gentleman," the girl said quickly.

Madame Estelle made no reply but merely indicated that the girl was to follow her. Up three flights of stairs she puffed to an eave room in the garret. It contained nothing but a cot bed with shabby quilts and a broken-down dresser with a stained and marred mirror.

"You can sleep here; you'll eat in the kitchen with the others. And the sooner you get to work the better," snapped madame.

"I—don't understand," the girl stammered. "This—this is a servant's room!"

"It's plenty good enough, for you," said madame. "You can't expect to play the fine lady here. If I'm going to feed and clothe you you'll have to work. The floor downstairs is waiting to be scrubbed; you can begin on that."

"You mean—I'm not to continue school," the girl said, unable to realize the enormity of the misfortune which had befallen her.

"School!" snapped the woman. "You've been in school all your life. Time to do something useful now. You'll scrub the floors and wait on the folks here and do what I tell you or I'll thrash the hide off you."

"Scrub—wait on people—I won't do it!" cried the girl with a sudden flare of rage. The reply was a stinging blow across the face that knocked her upon the bed.

"Don't you ever say 'won't' to me," said Madame Estelle. "Your father thought he was too good for me and I suppose you do, too. But I got the best of him and I'll get the best of you, never fear." The girl stared at her tearless with blazing eyes.

"I won't stay here, I hate you!" she stormed. "I don't believe you're my mother at all!"

"Oh, I'm your mother all right," replied the woman. "See this?" She rolled up her arm and showed upon the outer curve a stainlike mole. "That's my mark," she said. "My

"Scrub—wait on people—I won't do it!" cried the girl in a sudden flare of rage.

mother had it and her mother before her. And I see it through the sleeve on your arm there."

The girl shuddered.

"Why should you hate me?" she asked. "I never did anything to you!"

"If you'd been like me it might have been different," madame answered. "But you're like your father. Take off your things and put on that apron and get to work." The girl looked at the coarse apron thrown across the bed.

"I won't do it!" the girl cried again. I just won't. I'll run away first!"

"Try it!" sneered madame. "The police are good friends of mine. All I got to do is tell 'em I got a daughter that's a little bit off in her head and they'll bring you back fast enough. The law backs up a woman that wants to keep her child at home."

The girl's lips trembled but she fought back the tears. "I won't work and you can't make me," she repeated. Ignorance made her bold.

"We'll see about that," said madame. "Might as well have it out now." She locked the outer door and jerked open a door leading to a closet in the eaves where a number of trunks were stored. From one of these she selected a stout strap. The girl sprang for the door but the woman, powerful for all her fat, seized her by her blonde braids and jerked her to her knees. The house was an old one with thick walls and many winding hallways and the eave room was far away.

And there was no one in the house except madame's frightened servants. The accumulated hatred of fourteen years animated madame's blows, and it was perhaps lucky for the girl that fat made madame's breath rather short. Else in her fury she might have defeated her own purpose and killed the girl. As it was she exhausted herself soon and discovered that the girl was unconscious. She rolled her over on her back, flung a pitcher of water over her, and when she felt the faint flutter of her heart waddled away.

After a while very softly, trembling in her aged knees, slinking along like a frightened old shadow came Mammy Chloe. She entered the girl's room softly, closed the door and with murmurs of pity and gentle croonings lifted the girl to her bed, laving her wounds tenderly. Consciousness returned presently and the girl's lids flew open. She started away with a stifled cry.

"Don't you be afraid, honey!" crooned the old woman. "It's just old Mammy Chloe, come to take care of you, poor little lamb."

The girl clung to the gentle black's arm and sobbed wildly.

"Hush honey, hush," cautioned the old woman. "If she done hear you and ketch me here she'll sho' treat us rough."

"Oh, what'll I do, mammy, what'll I do?" sobbed the girl.

"Ain't nothin' nobody can do agin' Madame Estelle's wishes, honey," the old woman told her sadly. "She sho' am a power hyarabouts. Yo'll just have to do like the rest of the folks here, do jest what she wants and step lively and pray the good Lawd for hot wedder."

"Hot weather?" asked the girl.

"She don't beat us all so much when it's hot, reckon it's too much trouble fer her," said the old woman.

"She beats you too?" asked the girl. "What for?"

"Lord, honey, folks like Ma'me Stelle don't need no reason for bein' mean. They's just nat'ally born that way. I done knowed yo' paw, honey," she continued. "I belonged to his folks when he was a little feller and he sure was one fine gentleman. So I'll do what I kin for you, honey, but we mustn't let her ketch on, or she'll send me away," cautioned Mammy Chloe, last remnant of that old race of servants to whom faithfulness to the master and the mas-

ter's "kinery" was the dominating principle of life.

"What's she like?" asked Monsieur Vic that afternoon when he heard the new arrival had been installed.

"Come here, you," called madame. The girl set down the tray she was carrying and came to the doorway. The coarse apron was too big for her, her feet were thrust in shabby, cast-off slippers, ill fitting and shapeless, a bruise disfigured one pale cheek and her blonde hair was braided and bound too tightly about her head, to avoid falling into the scrub bucket which she had recently been manipulating. She held her head proudly and looked at madame unflinchingly with level, reproachful eyes. Her delicate coloring and lines, her pure face would have inspired Fra Angelico to the painting of fragile angels, or set Botticelli sketching lightly. But to Monsieur Vic feminine pulchritude represented what he called an "armful" and he thought she was merely a scrawny little wretch.

"She sure don't look like you," he said to Madame Estelle. "You must 'a' been right pretty once," he added carelessly. Madame knew well that her beauty had long since been buried under layers of fat and distorted by ugly lines, but unreasonably that "once" jarred upon her. She said nothing but mentally chalked up a little mark against Monsieur Vic's name. He never knew why the *omelette au fines herbs* which she made for his breakfast the next morning disagreed with him so violently, so that he was confined to his bed for three days.

But madame knew and his misery wiped off that little check mark. She found opportunities for many such little secret revenges.

Youth is adaptable, and Christine, never referred to by name but merely as "here—you!" made the best she could of her life at the inn.

She learned to scrub, to fetch and carry, to take unmerited reproof silently. She learned with pitiful alacrity the trick of all defenseless creatures, to avoid danger by effacing herself. As the rabbit crouches motionless in the grass, hoping to be mistaken for part of the landscape, and often succeeding, so did Christine learn to blend herself in the background and as soon as opportunity offered, to slip soundlessly away.

Madame Estelle saw to it that no task should be too menial for her slender hands, no humiliation too harsh for that proud head, no deprivation too severe.

She was the outcast of the ménage at whom all sneered. All but Mammy Chloe, timid, tremulous, Mammy Chloe upon whom the years were piling their weight rapidly so that Christine, fearful of losing that one friend, took upon herself secretly many of the aging negress' tasks, lest Madame Estelle discover the failing weakness of her hands and eyes and send her away, leaving Christine entirely friendless.

So a long year dragged by and Christine the drudge became an old story to Madame Estelle and time wore off the fine edge of her revenge. She became a matter of course, a useful bit of animated furniture, to be used and kicked about and forgotten.

Then one day in the kitchen the butcher boy took notice of Christine, whose growing beauty weariness and the smudges that were continually upon her face did not entirely mask.

"Say, kid," he said jocularly, "why don't you wash your face? Can't expect to catch the fellows with that mug." He put his fingers under her chin and tipped up her face familiarly. The servants snickered and Madame Estelle personally, superintending the making of a gumbo, smiled. Thus encouraged the boy attempted a kiss. Christine's eyes blazed and she struck him a resounding slap.

"Get out of here!" yelled Madame Estelle, aiming a blow at the girl. "I'll teach you to let my help alone. You ought to be glad to get anybody to kiss an ugly thing like you."

Unexpectedly from her corner where she sat shelling peas Mammy Chloe spoke up. It may be that she knew that the number of her years was completed and so was fearless. It may be that this last insult to the girl in whose veins flowed the blood of her beloved, old-time masters was too much for her. It may have been just loyalty.

"Miss Christine's quality folks, she ain't like the rest of you-all," she said to Madame Estelle. "You hadn't ought to treat quality folks that way, Ma'me 'Stelle. The Lord's sure gwine curse you fo' that some day."

For a moment Madame Estelle was almost paralyzed with wrath and surprise at the insubordination of this hitherto meek old servant. The others held their breath and Christine grew pale. Madame Estelle used her favorite weapon, her fist animated by a powerful arm and struck the aged black woman a single blow. She slid off the chair to the floor and lay still.

"You've killed her!" cried Christine as she bent over the old woman's form and strove to bring her back to consciousness. "She's dead," she acknowledged finally. "You killed her, murdered her!" Her eyes blazed.

Madame Estelle shrugged off the moment's tremor which the sight of death brings to even the most hardened.

"Well, what of it?" she said. "She's nothin' but an old nigger anyway," and waddled out of the kitchen.

For a week Christine waited for some sign of the law's authority but nothing happened. Mammy Chloe had been indeed "nothing but an old nigger" and nobody save Christine sobbing in her attic cared how she came to her death.

Two more years went by.

The inn increased in patronage and fame. Madame's omelets and sauces and gumbos became of an even greater excellence.

And as the swamp lily lifts its white and fragrant purity above the black ooze in which its roots are caught, so Christine continued to live at the inn, a drudge whom no one noticed, keeping in her heart as in a monstrance unconquerable purpose, inviolate purity, and longing for beauty, cleanliness and peace.

All about her stretched the swamp of viciousness, full of foulness from which she shrank, full of hideousness from which she turned away her eyes. Christine had learned one thing above all else. She had learned the meaning of fear. Not alone by blows that bruised her delicate flesh. but of other things which she had seen look out like hideous beasts from the jungle through Monsieur Vic's red-brown eyes.

Despite overwork, and neglect and cruelty Christine blossomed into a rare and delicate beauty. Her skin was like the petal of a Duchess rose, satiny and marvelously tinted. Her hair was a veil of shining gold, lustrous, and silken, her wistful brown eyes were thickly and darkly fringed and the shadows under them but enhanced them. Her lips were fluted and her nose straight and sensitive. There is no more innocent pride than that of youth in its own charm, but this was denied Christine. She feared her beauty like a trap and hid it as carefully. She buried her budding curves under ill-fitting aprons, strangled her hair in braids bound tightly about her head and disguised the shell-like fairness of her skin with smudge, hoarding her looks as she did her dreams for that day steadily, if so slowly drawing nearer, the day when she should be of age and escape.

Under Mammy Chloe's advice she had begun saving a little money. In

the everlasting cleaning of floors she came occasionally upon coins which had escaped other eyes, money spilled from careless pockets, or flung from generous hands. And these she carefully put away in secret places, hoarding a little sum that would take her to some place far away beyond the reach of the terrible Madame Estelle.

One hour she had to herself, an hour when she dared to be herself, to take out her shy dreams and hopes and look at them; an hour when she unbound her hair and bathed her weary young body and slipped from her mind the weight of disgust and fear and loneliness that burdened her days. This was the hour before dawn. Then, the revels of the night over, the music stilled, feasters replete, darkness descended upon the Cuisine Bergere. In that hour Madame Estelle and Monsieur Vic and all the household slept, heavily, exhausted. And then Christine crept timidly forth into the courtyard upon which the back of the old-fashioned Spanish house opened. Above the courtyard was a square of sky, velvety dark and jeweled with stars. There with an unfailing thrill she would watch it change to the pearly rose and the sparkling azure of dawn. In the courtyard was a fountain, old and mossy and faintly trickling. But when the clatter of the kitchens and the blare of revelry was stilled its silvery voice might be heard.

Closing her eyes Christine would dream of her lost convent gardens, where peace and purity and kindliness dwelt. Or she would let her mind roam in fancy to the source of that stream of water, some far-away spring in the shadowy forest, where deer wandered amid the ferns and violets that fringed its banks. Very seldom now there looked into her dreams the face of the Galahad with silver armor who would love and cherish her forever. She had small faith felt in Galahads.

She sat thus one morning, combing her hair beside the fountain. Dawn was breaking over head and a faint cool breeze touched her. The jasmine and trumpet vines wreathed about the galleries that opened on the courtyard stirred and spilled down fragrance and fluttering delicate petals.

There was a sound of hoofs upon the cobble pavement outside the high gate that opened into the courtyard.

It was the milkman, she supposed. However, quite suddenly she heard a voice lifted in song. It was a voice that might have stirred hearts to enthusiasm, hearts more sophisticated than hers, a baritone, mellow, rounded with an effortless surge and lilt that seemed to drown her heart in beauty. The words seemed to apply curiously to her feeling—*"Mon cœur s'eleve a ton voix."* She sat lost in the sheer beauty of the thing. It continued, drew nearer, accompanied by a rattle of cans.

The gate flung open and he came in. Another might have seen only the exterior, the milkman, as he was, a slender youth with gay brown eyes and a delightful smile and powerful arms that slung the heavy milk tins easily to his shoulder. Head thrown back he continued to sing as he approached the back door. Christine had never heard "La Bohème," but the notes seemed to fall like a golden rain about the courtyard, and she listened wide eyed, forgetful of all else. Then, her very intentness drew his gaze through the still misty light and he stopped, hesitated and advanced toward her, touched her hair timidly and then smiled.

"So you are real," he said. "It is like-a da picture."

She became conscious all at once of her unbound hair, her bare feet and hastily gathered her locks together.

"Do not braid-a it up," he said. "It is so beautiful like-a that." His smile was friendly, admiring, the first warm and truly friendly smile she had en-

"So you are real," Giorgio said. "It is like-a da picture."

countered for many weary months. It warmed her heart like sunshine.

"How can you sing like that?" she exclaimed. "It is like an angel!"

"And you look-a like an angel, no, like-a the Virgin, wait-a for the good Angel Gabriel," he said. "Back where I live when I was leetle boy, back in Italia, there is a picture like-a that. She sits just so, with her yellow hair like da light around her."

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Giorgio, the milkman," he told her. "Pedro he is go away, and I take-a his job, earn-a the money, study the music so some day maybe I can sing."

Love is love, wherever it springs up. whether in the heart of nobleman and noble maid, or as now in the heart of these two humble ones meeting in the dawn over the milk cans.

Giorgio noted the bruises on her arms, the purity of her face and his heart flamed to her defense. In the warmth of affection, friendliness, her timid heart so long chilled by adversity opened like a rose.

Once again he sang for her, only once, lifting his voice in the song beloved of his countrymen, "Santa Lucia," but Madame Estelle had awakened, banged the window down with curses and commands to "Get out of there!" Trembling, Christine had shrunken into the shadows of the gallery and so for once had escaped notice.

She would not risk discovery of this new and precious thing which had come into her life and which she knew were it discovered would be taken away from her by her tormenters.

A month went by.

Timidly, whispering in the dawn beneath the jasmine vine they planned their future. Giorgio was poor, and the sum she had saved was insignificant. He realized the power of Madame Estelle, proprietress of the Cuisine Bergere from the coffers of which certain corrupt officials received well worthwhile revenues. It was no idle boast on Madame Estelle's part that she could do just about what she pleased and the

law would not catch her, dared not catch her.

She knew too much, she had something on too many people high up in political circles. And the laws of Louisiana are old laws, in which women and minors have scant rights. Until Christine should be of age she would have trouble should she try to escape from Madame Estelle and she had learned that it was only necessary to show a preference for something, to have the object of that desire taken away. As ever madame's hatred fed upon such thwartings.

Secretly the lovers bided their time, saving their money, dreaming of a future together.

"In California I have-a the brother," said Giorgio. "He raise-a the grape too." Together they dreamed happy innocent dreams of a vineyard in that sunny land; of a little white cottage nestling in the shade of olive trees; of a garden wherein flowers would bloom and birds sing and perhaps some day children play.

Christine thought she kept her secret well hidden but she could not keep the happiness out of her face. Love lit lamps in her eyes, curved her lips up instead of down, hope put spring into her step and a song in her heart, that she could not wholly disguise.

"What's the matter with you?" snarled Madame Estelle one day. "You look different. If it was anybody but you I'd think you had a lover." The words struck terror to the girl's heart and for a few days she watched herself sharply.

Then one day she noted Monsieur Vic's eyes upon her curiously.

"Go wash your face," he said sharply.

She dared not disobey.

"H'm!" he said. "Good skin, good features too, if you did your hair decently." His eyes roamed her figure until she felt seared.

"How old are you?" he snapped.

"Seventeen," she said.

"H'm!" he asked. "Sing? Dance?"

She shook her head.

"Easy enough to teach you," he murmured. "We need you to entertain." He dismissed her with a nod. She fled to her room in a panic. She was not surprised that evening when he met her in a hallway and kissed her. She wrenched herself away and hid for hours, trembling in the cellar among the potato sacks.

Hesitatingly she told Giorgio of this new peril. With difficulty she restrained him from going into the house at once to find Monsieur Vic and kill him. She finally got him to the point of making a rational plan. They determined to take the small stake which his savings and hers combined would make and escape that night to California. True, they would arrive penniless, but that was better than not to arrive at all.

With beating heart late that night she took her small possessions and tied them into a bundle. They were little enough. A few books, prizes from the convent school, a daguerreotype of her father and the carefully hoarded money. Timidly, fearful as a criminal she crept down the stairs to the courtyard to wait for Giorgio.

He came and brought a surprise for her. It was a white dress for her wedding, white slippers, and stockings and all else that she needed. He had gotten the wife of a friend to buy it that she might not take a single thing from the hateful house of her bondage. He brought too an armful of bride roses, silky, fragrant buds that mirrored her purity and beauty. It was her wish to put on this dress, to show herself to her lover free from the disfiguring rags of her drudgery that was her undoing, the innocent wish of a bride to look well in the eyes of her lover.

She returned to the house, and fearful of the many halls and stairs she

must traverse before reaching her own room she went into a pantry, deserted at that hour, to change her clothing.

And in his room upstairs Monsieur Vic stirred restlessly. He finally decided to go for a sandwich.

When she emerged from the pantry, arrayed in the filmy garment, white ruffles of her dress floating about her girlish form, her hair softly curling against her forehead, her lips curved with happiness, her arms full of roses, the switch clicked and the darkened room flared into light and showed her Monsieur Vic. She screamed but the scream was cut short by Vic's hand over her mouth, his powerful arms about her body held her back. With all her strength she fought, but he forced her steadily toward the stairs and away from the back of the house which opened upon the courtyard where Giorgio waited for his bride.

The walls of the old house were thick, the doors were heavy and the curtains many.

Christine tried to scream, but Vic clapped his hand over her mouth.

He got her as far as the top turn of the stairs, but there upon the platform he was forced to put her down. The sound of the struggle woke Madame Estelle who came out of her room above lamp in hand, like a sinister Fate.

"So!" she exclaimed, at sight of the girl. "It is you! Going away, eh?"

"Let me go!" Christine stormed. "You shan't keep me. You've no right to keep me here! I'm going to be married. Let me go!"

"Married, eh?" said Madame Estelle, and she and Monsieur Vic laughed loudly.

"Not so bad looking, eh?" said Monsieur Vic to Madame Estelle.

"She'll probable be not so bad—after she learns dancing," madame returned.

The girl looked from one to the other, the man, leering, the woman, mocking, triumphant.

The girl cried out, her hands to her face. "No, no, no!" she exclaimed. "Never. Never!" She turned despairing eyes upon the woman. For the first time she used the word that had never come to her lips before in Madame Estelle's presence, a last despairing cry to the heart of the woman above her.

"Mother! Help me!"

It was a cry of instinct, a cry that pierced through deceptions and self deceptions to the soul of the hardened proprietress of the Cuisine Bergere; an appeal to that instinct deep as life itself, of the maternal to protect its young. The cry reached the depths, for a moment a twinge of remorse plucked at the withered heart of Madame Estelle.

But hate indulged is stronger than love denied. Revenge was the devil to whom Madame Estelle had sold her soul. She turned her back on the girl.

"You're your father's daughter. You think yourself too good for us," she snapped. "Why should I care what happens to you?" She went in her room and closed the door.

Monsieur Vic glared at the girl, his sallow face pale and beaded with moisture, his eyes wickedly alight.

It was his trick of licking his lips that suddenly decided the girl. Her eyes roamed the hallways and shadowy room despairingly as an animal's eyes roam its cage. Closed doors all about, doors behind which would be only mockery and contempt. But one door stood open and that led to Monsieur Vic's room at the top of the stairs. No hope anywhere, no help anywhere. Giorgio waiting in the moonlit courtyard downstairs too far to hear, too far to help.

Suddenly, so suddenly that Monsieur Vic could not move, the girl plunged through the window that opened from the turn of the stairs to the stone-paved side yard below. Screams followed the crash of the glass, doors opened, curses sounded. Madame Estelle emerged. Monsieur Vic turned dazed, to descend the stairs when some one sprang at him, a powerful young hand clutched his throat.

"Where is she?" demanded Giorgio, shaking Monsieur Vic like a rat. "Where is my Christine! Answer!" Helplessly Monsieur Vic pointed to the broken window.

The hand released his throat as Giorgio plunged through the rooms toward the front door.

She lay upon the stone area-way broken, amid the crushed roses.

The delicate swamp lily had lifted its white and fragrant purity above the black ooze of the back water, at last. Her eyelids fluttered.

And as Giorgio gathered the broken lily in his arms, he kissed her—but not good-by. She stirred in his arms. Her lips fluttered against his. Then all the tears of the ages rushed over his heart and left it tortured with exquisite joy.

"My Christine," he whispered.

"Giorgio—my lover," she breathed.

And as the bells rang the hour of noon, though the wedding gown was not used and the fragile little bride rested on a couch—there was a wedding.

IN THE WORLD TO-DAY

THERE'S a softness in the air,
Hints of fragrance, rich and rare,
Little flitting, humming things—
Bird's gay call—a flash of wings!

Soft, clear colors in the sky,
Small nests in the tree-tops, high,
Flowers all along the way—
June is in the world to-day!

L. D. STEARNS

An Old Love's Shackles

By Amenia Rosehill

THIS IS THE STORY SO FAR.

Rupert Wyngate, accepting the guilt of his wife, Sonia's, theft of an expensive necklet, is sent to prison. He escapes, and is aided in getting away by Rosaleen Delamere, who nursed him through an illness. On the way to Buffalo in Rosaleen's car, they are stopped by a drunken laborer, who attempts to pull the chauffeur's cap from Rupert's head, thus endangering his secret by disclosing his close-cropped hair.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIDDEN.

IN that moment of terror Rosaleen lived through a tragedy. She visualized the betrayal—his recapture. She felt her heart drained of its blood, and her tongue was dry as she spoke to the man at Wyngate's elbow.

"Take your hand down! How dare you! You're drunk! If my chauffeur happens to have a cold, is that your business? Drive on, John!" The cart lurched off the bridge. Wyngate started the car. Would he stop them? Or those idle loungers leaning on the bridge's parapet, would they believe him?

She saw the grins and shrugs exchanged. Heard the rough chaff at the man's snub. They shot on past the little group that stared at them and the car. The village was behind, and they went on, on into the open.

"Oh!" she breathed. But she said no more.

Wyngate looked down at her white face, into which the blood was slowly returning, and he blessed her in his heart. She suffered terror for his sake! She was glad at his escape. Bless her!

For the next hour or so Rosaleen hardly dared to hope. That last peril had shaken her. The country folk behind there might talk it over, wonder, suspect. They might send word to Sing Sing. Then she pulled herself together sharply. This wouldn't do! Carry on, carry on as if in the old days when the shells fell around the field hospital, and one couldn't stop in one's work to wonder where the next one would drop. That was the only way to do one's duty.

Northwest they drove, racing over smooth and empty roads, slowing down when they might be seen. Never man had comrade so brave and helpful! And for her, the thought that she might be his friend, his true, close friend, brought joy and comfort. It was worth

it all to serve him, to be given this chance of aiding him. At last! At last, after days and nights of flight, when they were almost losing count of the hours, the goal they had set before them lay close. As evening fell, they came in sight of the heavy, dusky cloud hanging low over a great stretch of huddled spires and tall chimneys and crowded houses. Buffalo lay just ahead.

She explained things to him as he drove on through the twilight, and the lights began to prick out like yellow stars before them, and the great city faded into a dark mass with a radiance over it. She had thought it all out in those last few hours.

"I will get out of the car as soon as we are in the town. We had better not keep together now. I will go to some second-rate hotel. They don't notice people there as they do in the big ones. You must take the car straight on to a quiet garage and get a lodging near. I've an idea about something for you. You must keep hidden till your hair is grown, you know. And then, when the hunt for you is over, you can get away across the Atlantic, as you said you wanted to do."

"But you? What about yourself? You must leave me now and go. Your people will wonder what has become of you. They'll be anxious——"

She shook her head, smiling a little.

"Poor Aunt Selina is too ill to trouble. And my uncle is too busy looking after her. Anyway, they know I'm having this tour, and they won't expect me back yet. But I'll go as soon as I know you are hidden. It would be better for no one to connect you with the car."

They were passing along a poor and dirty street now. It widened presently into a better one with little stores, lit up, and stretches of small houses. They passed a butcher's store, a grocer's, a theatrical wig maker's, with its window full of wigs and beards. Her eye rested on it as she kept watch for a humble hotel of the sort she described. Presently they came out into a square, with an old-fashioned, respectable family hotel on one side of it. She touched his arm.

"Stop presently," she said, "and let me out. I will try for a room at that hotel. You'll know where to find me. Put the car up and find a safe lodging for yourself. Then come and leave a message for me."

The brake grated. The car slowed up at the corner. The high adventure was nearly done. Rosaleen got out and lifted down her suit case from the back of the car. She would not let him carry it to the hotel for her.

"No, it isn't too heavy. Don't leave the car. Good night!" and their hands met in a long, long clasp, gripped, parted. It seemed to Wyngate, as he went off down the side street to hunt for a garage, that the sky had suddenly darkened.

Rosaleen went in at the open door of the dingy family hotel. She crossed to the desk, where a youthful clerk sat chewing the end of a wooden penholder and trying to whistle between his teeth at the same time.

She could have a room? Yes. Supper? It was on the table still, but she'd better hurry. He whistled to a boy to take her suit case, and in another moment she was in the elevator. Then with a shock she remembered she had given Wyngate no money! How on earth would he manage! She was angry with herself for her own stupidity.

She sent a message back to the office by the boy:

"If a chauffeur calls here presently to leave a message for me I want to speak to him. Let me know."

The bedroom was stuffy and dingy, and the wall paper dim and discolored. The Wellington Hotel might be respectable, but it was unattractive. The better, perhaps, for keeping unnoticed.

Rosaleen took off her motor hat and unfastened the veil from it. She felt suddenly desperately weary. Life felt dreary and gray and arid. She walked over to the marble-topped washstand, poured out a basinful of water from the heavy water pitcher, and plunged face and hands again and again into it. Ah, how good that was!

She brushed and rearranged her hair. Then she stood before the spotted mirror and pinned on her hat again, for she remembered suddenly that when Wyngate came she must go out of doors to speak to him. He must keep his cap on, and he could not do that in the hotel.

She went down to the half-emptied dining room. The little tables were nearly empty, but a few quiet people still sat at some of them, a clergyman and his wife, a family party with children, one or two business men. She ate the table d'hôte supper with eagerness. How good food tasted after days of bread and canned things!

She was back in the lobby soon to wait for Wyngate. The evening papers lay on the center table. She took one and went over to a deep armchair under the electric light to read it. From the page before her leaped up the ugly headlines:

Escaped convict still at large.

She turned the page with a shiver, and looked idly down the sheet of advertisements to take her mind off that hideous notice. Her glance fell on a paragraph among the want ads.

Wanted a middle-aged or elderly respectable man as caretaker for a chapel institution and hall. Living room attached. Light place for man untrained for other work. Apply Chairman of Chapel Committee, 77 Belton Street, between ten and twelve or three and four.

The sheet dropped from her hand. An inspiration had suddenly come to her.

Could it be done? Why not? Anything was possible if one had enough daring! She ran it over in her mind, her hands locked together in her lap, her veins tingling. It was so bold that its very audacity tempted her. Surely it could be managed! Then she looked up to see Wyngate on the steps, and, with a light, unhurried movement, she crossed the faded red carpet and met him at the door.

"Don't come in!" she breathed. "I'll come out to you. You can't take your cap off!"

He had touched it to her, and he stood and looked down at her. His eyes twinkled.

"I thought of that. I was going to forget my manners. But I didn't think you'd have finished dinner so soon."

"Oh, I'm so sorry! I was such an owl! I never gave you any money for the garage or—or for anything!"

"No. I told them my lady had forgottten. I found a place and put the car in. They told me of a room I could get close by, and I have that, too. But they wanted a deposit——"

She broke in hurriedly.

"Here, take my purse; I've plenty of money besides that. You must borrow from me till things are right again."

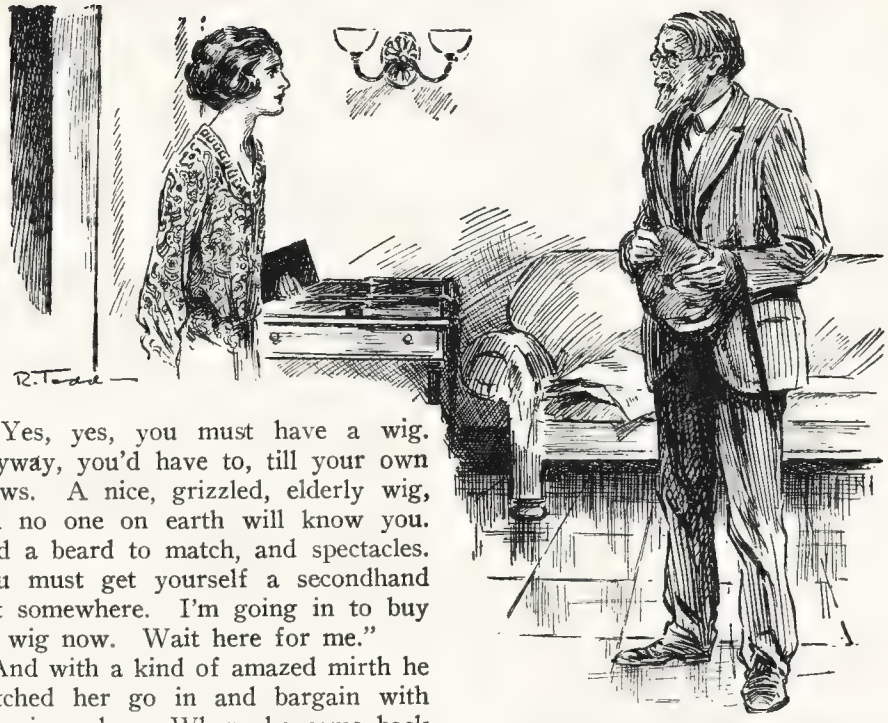
"I just hate it! But some day I'll pay you back."

"And I've found a place for you. A caretaker for a chapel hall, whatever that is. It sounds like the very thing. I can give them references, you know. It ought to be quite safe. They want an elderly man."

"Elderly, eh? How about that part of it?"

"I've an idea. I've been thinking it all out while I waited. See!" She had led him down the street the other side of the square. Now she halted before the lighted window of the theatrical wig maker, where the square of yellow light showed up the array of wigs and beards.

"You don't mean——" Then he suddenly shook with laughter. "That's the very ultimate!"



What a perfect disguise! His own mother wouldn't have known him.

"Yes, yes, you must have a wig. Anyway, you'd have to, till your own grows. A nice, grizzled, elderly wig, and no one on earth will know you. And a beard to match, and spectacles. You must get yourself a secondhand suit somewhere. I'm going in to buy the wig now. Wait here for me."

And with a kind of amazed mirth he watched her go in and bargain with the wig maker. When she came back to him she handed him a parcel that was soft and springy. What a surprising girl she was! How wonderful!

A knock came at Rosaleen's door, and the voice of the hallboy sounded: "Somebody to see forty-seven." She flung down the glove she was mending, and hurried to the elevator. All the morning she had waited in. Wyngate would soon be here to tell her.

The lobby was dim with faint, blue, curling tobacco smoke, but it lay empty except for a shabby man in ill-cut clothes, who stood twirling a shapeless cloth cap in his hands. Her glance passed him, flitted round the vacant hall, stopped disappointed. Then she heard her name breathed deferentially, softly:

"Miss Delamere!" And with a shock that was almost frightening she knew that the man was Wyngate.

What a perfect disguise! The lank hair streaked with gray, the short, ragged beard, and the spectacles. The very picture of a respectable elderly man fallen on misfortunes. His own mother would not have known him.

"Oh!" she uttered, and she put out her hand before she remembered. He backed away deferentially. "Oh, I never, never should have known you."

"Good! It took in the chairman, too! He's engaged me, if you can give me a recommendation. I told him you'd give me a reference. But should you?"

She looked him square in the face.

"You know I can! That's easily settled!"

"Then, if it's all right, he wants me to start to-day. It's a soft job: scrubbing and sweeping and putting out chairs and stacking them again. A fool could do it. Twelve dollars a week and a room to live in. It's the biggest kind of luck to have nabbed it! I thought, if he took your word for me, you could

get away this evening. I've brought the car round here on the chance and put it in the hotel garage. I changed into these togs inside it. It won't do for me to be a chauffeur any longer. I packed everything in the bag. Exit John, the driver, and enter Robert Gates, the caretaker!"

"Robert Gates?"

"Yes, I had to have a name, you know. That's enough like my own to remember, but it won't give me away. The old sportsman's coming round to see you presently. Hoped you wouldn't mind his coming at his dinner hour."

Between twelve and one Rosaleen was interviewed by a new visitor. Mr. Jones was old and white haired, and his sight was failing. He was fussy and precise, and tiresome, but he was polite and anxious to be civil.

The young lady knew this man who had applied for the post of caretaker? Yes, she knew him very well.

She could vouch for his honesty and his steadiness? The old chairman of the committee leaned forward anxiously in the big chair in the lobby where they talked. He was responsible to the chapel.

"He is perfectly steady and honest." She said it without a quaver. Yes, she would stake her own soul on that, her own future happiness.

Then, if Miss—Miss Delamere could assure him of that, Gates should have the post. Mr. Jones stood up and took his hat from the table beside him. They didn't like to leave the chapel property without somebody to look after it. It was a satisfaction to find a man so soon. The last man had been unsatisfactory, and grumbled over the salary. It was perhaps low in these days, but a man could manage on it.

That evening just after supper Rosaleen stood drawing on her driving gloves before the hotel garage, where the big car stood ready.

In the shadow of a doorway she and Wyngate said their farewells. Nobody was there to see the girl in her neat coat and small hat talking earnestly with a shabby, elderly man with clothes that might have been cut out with a spade. Nobody wondered.

"You'll write sometimes, and let me know how you are getting on." She had a little pile of stamped, addressed envelopes in her hand, and she held them out to him. "See, it's safer for you not to direct them in your own writing, isn't it?" His admiring glance was fixed on her.

"Do you think of everything? I believe you do. Yes, I'll write. I should say so! I'll lie low here till there's a chance of getting across the water, and then I'll be all right. And—I don't know why I should ask you to do something more when you've done so much. But there's just one thing——"

She interrupted him quickly.

"Of course, I'll do anything—anything!"

"It's—— Well, I've left my wife alone in New York. She hasn't any friend that could help her if she needed help. She has money; it isn't that. But she may want somebody sensible and kind. If I thought you would be good to her if she needs it—I'm afraid for her!"

She looked up at him simply and gently.

"I'll do everything I can. Poor woman, she must be suffering so!"

His mouth twisted a little.

"It isn't that. It's that one has to take care. She—she isn't very responsible."

"And what anxiety she must be in," said the girl warmly. "I'll be able to set her mind at rest. How glad she'll be to know you're safe, won't she?"

He put out his hand with a swift motion.

"Don't tell her that! Don't tell her *anything,*" he cried sharply. "I mean" —as he saw the surprise in her eyes—

"it's better not to tell anybody. She isn't the sort that worries. There's no fear of that. But—but I feel she may need some one to be a friend to her."

"I'll be her friend. Be sure of that."

"And—and—— You ought to be getting off now." How his initiative, crushed and broken by prison life, was returning to him! "There are no words ever made to thank you in. But for you—— You did it all. My best friend, my plucky, clever little pal! God bless you!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE KEEPING OF A PROMISE.

The last scarlet stain of sunset light flickered out into dusk as Rosaleen's car swept through the outer squalid suburb, dirty and begrimed, and she sped out along the open road. The fever and the throb of excitement died down into a cold, chill blank. Suddenly, quite suddenly, the world seemed gray and level. Her work was done. She had helped him all she could. What was left?

Then came the stab of recollection. Her promise! She had pledged her word to befriend his wife. She had bound herself to help her, if she needed help, a woman she didn't even know. Rosaleen's word was sacred.

Over her wondering mind there rolled the doubt that had stirred it when he asked it of her. Why had his face been so grimly set? Why was his voice so cold, his manner so hard, even while he took that pledge from her? Surely he would have shown some tenderness, some feeling when he begged for her charity to the woman he loved? It was strange; it wasn't like him. He was so great of heart over other things.

The wonder and the puzzle held her thoughts as she sped on. She got no farther than Stockport that night. As she drove in through the town she halted suddenly before a big, lighted hotel, and got down from the car. She sent it round to the garage, booked a room, reached it with a step that swayed and dragged.

When the chambermaid, who brought her in hot water and a tray of hot milk and crackers, had closed the door, Rosaleen undressed somehow—she didn't know how long it took—snapped off the light, fell into the blessed bed that yawned to receive her. A fatigue immeasurable, vast, overwhelming, seized her. She was so weary that she could have welcomed it if the earth had opened and swallowed her.

She wanted to forget everything.

Oh, that dreamless, long sleep, that drenched insensibility! How blissful it was to her! For the first time since that stark, striped-clad convict figure rose up before her on the road and thrilled her with the shock, she slept a sleep unhaunted by dreams of armed warders and flying fugitives. He was safe. Oh, thank God! Thank God! And she would do all she could to keep her promise to him, little as she could puzzle out how it was to be accomplished.

But the workings of the destiny that shapes our ends is more wonderful than any dreams of ours. The Director that never fails or falters was still drawing her on, little as she understood it.

It was late afternoon, nearly a week later, as she drove up to the terrace steps of Red Gables and looked with eyes that seemed like stranger's eyes on the rioting flowers and red-brick walls she had left so short a time ago.

Aunt Selina was entertaining a caller, and tea was still on the table as Rosaleen pushed the French window farther open and stepped into the cozy, pretty morning room. There was a little cry from Aunt Selina:

"Dear child! How you startled me! I thought you were still on the road. You haven't written for ages, naughty girl! You know Mrs. Chaytor, don't you? Ring for more tea, if you like. But I think there's some in the teapot."

Rosaleen poured a cup and stood piling a little plate with tea cake and shortbread, before she went to the low chair by the window.

"I'm so sorry, auntie. I ought to have written. Things happened, you see. Poor Knight was taken ill with appendicitis. He had to go to hospital for an operation. Oh, yes, he's getting on all right. But I went on alone. I thought I oughtn't to miss the trip when I had the chance of it."

She prayed inwardly that Aunt Selina wouldn't demand an itinerary of the route. But Knight's misfortune turned her thoughts from that peril, and for some ten minutes they discussed it in all its bearings. Mrs. Chaytor got up to go then. She was a tall, willowy woman, who swayed a little as she walked. She drew on her gloves with elaborate care, and took up her bead-embroidered bag from the table.

"I'm so glad I didn't miss you," she cooed as she took Rosaleen's hand in her slender one. "Oh, by the way, I'm asking everybody I come across: you don't happen to know any one who wants a delightful little furnished apartment in town, do you? I'm asking for a friend of mine, Lina Foster. She has to go out to join her husband in Mespot. She may be away six months or a year. It all hangs on when he gets leave. It's really a dinky little lodging, and going dirt cheap to a careful tenant."

"I don't believe I do just now. But I'll remember about it. Where is it, in case I hear of anybody?"

"It's in the Beresford, West End Avenue. Awfully central and convenient; subways and buses to the ends of the earth from there, and high-class shops quite at your elbow. Do think of somebody for her." Rosaleen's blood seemed to give a leap in her veins. She felt the red tide rush to her forehead.

"Why, I wonder! I think I might like it myself. I'd be glad to have an apartment in town for a few months." Then, as Aunt Selina's protests came: "Why, auntie, I could come down often and often to see you. I'd be quite near, you know. I've always thought it would be nice to stay in town for a little."

It was the finger of fate. Even to herself it seemed so. The Beresford! That was where his wife was. She remembered the address as if it had been written in letters of fire, remembered that day when she learned that he was married. All at once it seemed to her as if she must take this chance cast up from the waves of fortune, must take it at all costs. She would be able somehow to find out if his wife needed her; if in any way she could keep that promise to help her.

And so it settled itself in that curious, easy way things run when destiny takes them out of one's hand and one has no more to do with the planning.

The apartment was a cozy, pretty one, small enough to be easily run. The two maids were left in it. Rosaleen had only to unpack and settle down. She made inquiries from the maids about the other people in the house. Mrs. Wyngate had the apartment just across the landing from Mrs. Foster's, but seemed to be seldom at home.

Rosaleen was going out one afternoon not a week later. Her hand was on the doorknob, when the bell whirred. She opened the door and found a girl outside on the mat. She was beautifully dressed in a long fur coat to her feet, for the day was wet and chilly, and a daring little hat with drooping wings, an undoubted Paris creation.

"I—er—why, has Mrs. Foster gone already?" She was rouged and her eyes were surrounded with skillful touches. A faint repulsion crossed Rosaleen's mind. She hadn't much in common with women like this one. "I thought she said she wasn't off till tomorrow."

"Yes, she has left. I've taken her flat for a few months." Rosaleen still held the doorknob in her hand. The other looked cross.

"What a confounded nuisance! I wanted her to make up a bridge in my apartment. You don't play, I suppose?" she said doubtfully. "Oh, by the way, you don't know me, do you? I'm your stable companion over there. I'm Mrs. Wyngate."

This was his wife! This woman with the painted face and the hard eyes, and the mouth that had never known tenderness or unselfishness! In that moment of amazement Rosaleen understood. No wonder his face had been set when he spoke of her! No wonder any longer that he had looked so! Repulsion arose within her, but she put it down with a steady hand. She hadn't promised to like his wife, but to help her.

"Yes, I do play." It wasn't what she had meant to say, but she changed her mind abruptly.

"Oh, well, then, come along and cut in! We'll be a gay little band. Some jolly players!"

And so, all uneager, unjoyful at the prospect, Rosaleen found herself, a little later on, inside the flat that was Rupert Wyngate's.

It was a succession of illuminating sights and episodes. The careless prettiness of the furnishing, the lavish flowers, the overabundant tea and drinks, the French maid with the narrow, sharp eyes and the quick, dexterous movements.

The "gay little band," as Sonia called it—women with their appearance helped by art, with careless talk and ways that offended; men with long hair and men with shrill, high voices like women—was a decadent set, such as Sonia loved to gather about her. Before the first hand was out, Rosaleen realized that the play was too high for her. She was a good player and held her own, but her eyes opened wide at the stakes. He was hiding, living on twelve dollars a week, faring miserably, doing a sweeper's work; and his wife was spending their money as if it was water! The injustice, the cruelty of it made her heart burn within her.

"Sonia, old dear!" the woman in the green-and-yellow frock lay back in her armchair, with one slim foot thrust out. The blue smoke of her cigarette curled on high in little rings. "You do enjoy yourself, don't you? I just worship your roses and your things out of season. I always quote you as an A-1 apartment runner!"

Sonia flushed through the paint, her eyes glittering, her thin lips crinkled in a gratified smile. She leaned over and slapped her friend sportively.

It was an odious price to pay for keeping one's word to one's friend! Rosaleen took leave before her dinner

This was his wife—this woman with the painted face and the hard eyes!

hour. As she extracted herself from the reproaches and expostulations of the merry crew, she felt herself struggling with sick disgust and distaste of them all, of Sonia most of the lot. It was all loathsome, horrid, repulsive, their looks, their talk, their conduct.

She had never been flung into the company of men and women of the reckless and rowdy order. Yet she had given her word. She would stick to it, whatever it cost her of distaste or disgust. It was hard to see what help Sonia could need. She had plenty of money, to judge by the way she spent it; she had friends of a sort. But Rosaleen waited to see what might turn up.

She got away to her own room. When she pulled off her frock, smelling of tobacco and stale, too-vivid scent, and stained with a glass of wine a man had spilled over it, she threw it by with a sense of abhorrence. She would never put it on again. It would never feel clean and wholesome any more to her.

Between Sonia and herself there gaped a gulf so wide and deep that nothing but humanity could bridge it. By birth and tradition, by impulses of heart and soul and training, they were inhabitants of different planets.

Friendship! It was as if one were asked to make friends with a South Sea fish. But she had given her word. If it was a hard task for her to bridge that gulf, what must it have been for the man who was bound to her by duty and the laws of matrimony? Let her think of that and chide herself for making a mountain of difficulty out of it!

When she was asked again for bridge, she spoke out honestly:

"I can't afford to play as high as you do. I mustn't take a hand with you again, I'm afraid!" Sonia gave a shrill laugh that was like a peacock's squawk.

"Oh, you're a lamb! How quaint you are, aren't you? No more can I afford it. No more can any of us, if you come to that! It's a ripping little act for bringing in luck to the winner. Why, I made a hundred dollars this summer over bridge! Even Bobby can't touch me!"

"Bobby?"

"Yes, little Bob! He's taken Freddy's place with most of my bunch. Freddy turned rusty and wouldn't stand banker for a stony pal any more. We had to put him in the discard. Bobby's a sport. He'll lend you anything in reason, and let it run. And he's a winner to raise the stakes! You should see him at it!"

So the bridge at No. 26 saw Rosaleen no more. But her acquaintance with Sonia didn't suffer by it. Nearly every day there came a ring at her bell. She knew it by its whirring insistence. Sonia came in, sometimes running across the landing in her morning gown and boudoir cap. Now it would be to borrow money or her new hat—neither of which she ever offered to return—or to pour into Rosaleen's reluctant ears some bit of gossip about the people Sonia called her "dinky little band of comrades," or to beg Rosaleen to see if she couldn't spare a pair of silk stockings just for the evening.

"I haven't a pair. Really, on my bottom dollar, I haven't! I'm on the rocks, I can tell you I am. You don't go out a quarter as much as I do, and jazzing does play the very deuce with silk stockings!"

Rosaleen lent the money and the new hat, and offered up the silk stockings on the altar of her promise to Wyngate. The gossip she tried to refuse, but, finding that no use, she let it trickle into one ear and out the other. Sonia and she were farther apart than the poles in everything but their common interest. Let her think of her only as a fellow woman, a sister who might need her some day. No other relation was possible between them.

As her knowledge of Sonia grew her wonder increased that Wyngate could

Rosaleen had a shock, when she saw what five years of slum work had done to Biddy.

have chosen her for his wife. She understood more and more what his fatal mistake must have cost him.

She heard from him now and then, short letters, but full of good tidings. He got on all right with the work, was able to do some other jobs in his off hours, was saving money. Saving money on his twelve dollars a week! And his wife was letting it run through her fingers like water! He was putting by what he could for his passage across the Atlantic when the hue and cry should be over. Nobody had ever suspected. No one had shown the least idea that the elderly caretaker was the man on whose head there was still a price, whose portrait had been in all the papers as the escaped convict!

CHAPTER X.

THE LETTER.

So the autumn ran through with crisp, bright days, and winter came, with its short, gray hours and its fog and drizzle and damp.

After those strenuous war years, crowded hours of ceaseless work, of tense interest, of changing scenes, like a shifting drama, Rosaleen, like many other women, found it hard to settle back into a life empty of all these things. She looked back in amazement at her life before war came. Did she really find it then satisfying? Ask for nothing more than the easy round it brought her? That was over now forever.

She had many friends in town, and they were always glad to see her. But that didn't take up much idle time. She couldn't turn life into just that of doorkeeper on watch over the flat across the landing. She must do something, rise and battle. She must fill her minutes with something that counted.

She had a school friend married to a hard-working rector down in the East Side, and she went one day to look her up in the fine old-fashioned house, the rectory, which was hemmed in by slums. The tall old trees all round it were slowly dying in the grime and smoke.

Biddy Carstairs was a delicate woman, and Rosaleen had a shock when she saw what five years of slum life had done for her. She was white and languid, and her pretty face was worn

with lines, and her hair was fading. With a leap of the heart Rosaleen felt that she needed help.

They sat together in the old drawing-room where the cream panels were dingy with age. The spare furniture and pretty wedding presents, too soon tarnished and frayed, the water colors and the framed photographs of Italy, relics of the wedding trip, made a kind of insufficient trickle of adornment to the wide room.

"And so you see, Biddy, that I'm out with a banner among the unemployed. I'm without a job, and it bores me. Auntie doesn't want me. You see, I'm not Beaty, sweet as she always is to me. Uncle George and she are just everything to each other. I'm the fifth wheel. I'm sick of sitting with my hands in my lap. I want to be up and doing again. I want to take a trowel or a hod of bricks and help to build Jerusalem in America's green and pleasant land. Instead, I'm living in a good little snug flat with two excellent maids to run it. Two maids! Think how wicked! In these days of no houses and no servants! I'm ashamed! I ought to blush for myself—an able-bodied war worker!"

"I think you're to be envied!" The faint ghost of a weary smile flitted over the worn face that fronted her. "No parish to run when the kitchen's empty. No children's clothes to make when one has to cook the dinner and wash the dishes and do the work and play the harmonium!"

Rosaleen raised herself in the shabby chair whose cretonne cover had long ago lost its color and which showed thin patches on the arms and corners.

"You poor old girl! But, after all, that's work. I think I wish I had it. Something hard and strong and useful, and always at it, like the hospital. Look here, Biddy, can't you make use of a cumberer of the ground? Take me on as lay assistant!"

And that was how Rosaleen came to be deep in boys' clubs and girl scouts almost before she knew it. Twice a week she journeyed down to play games with whooping, noisy boys. Two or three evenings she taught girls dressmaking and cooking. And she managed to help much at the rectory.

One early, dark afternoon she was coming back from the parish. The yellow sun had struggled all day long to tear its way through the thick, frosty gloom. Now night was at hand. The air felt chill and sharp. Frost was coming. The cars and the subways were filled to overflowing. Rosaleen was jostled on the platforms, carried along with a rush of elbowing humanity. When she got back to the Beresford it was with the feeling that she had been in a football scrimmage. She let herself into her flat with her latchkey.

On the little hall table of carved cedar wood her letters lay on the brass tray. She took them with her to the drawing-room, where a cheery fire was burning, and snapped up the electric light as she flung off her furs and drew up a low chair to the blaze. She sank down among soft cushions, and, leaning back with a sense of well-being, she began to cut open the envelopes.

The little drawing-room was filled with relics of service life in the East. There were brass idols on the mantelshelf, together with Gozo pottery, and striped covers over the sofas, and gay mule cloths on the floor. She had come nearly to the end of the little pile of letters before she saw her own handwriting on an envelope. Then her fingers hurried. It was one of Wyngate's letters. She was always eager to see what he had to tell.

This letter stirred her to excitement. He had been doing some quite well-paid work for one of the chapel committee. He was putting money by. He had a scheme for getting out of the country. The search for him had died

down now, and he was eager to try. If he carried through an idea he had, he must see her before he left America. Her last letter had told him she was living in the Beresford. That was funny. He must come there on his way through New York. He wanted to make some arrangements about money, and consult her.

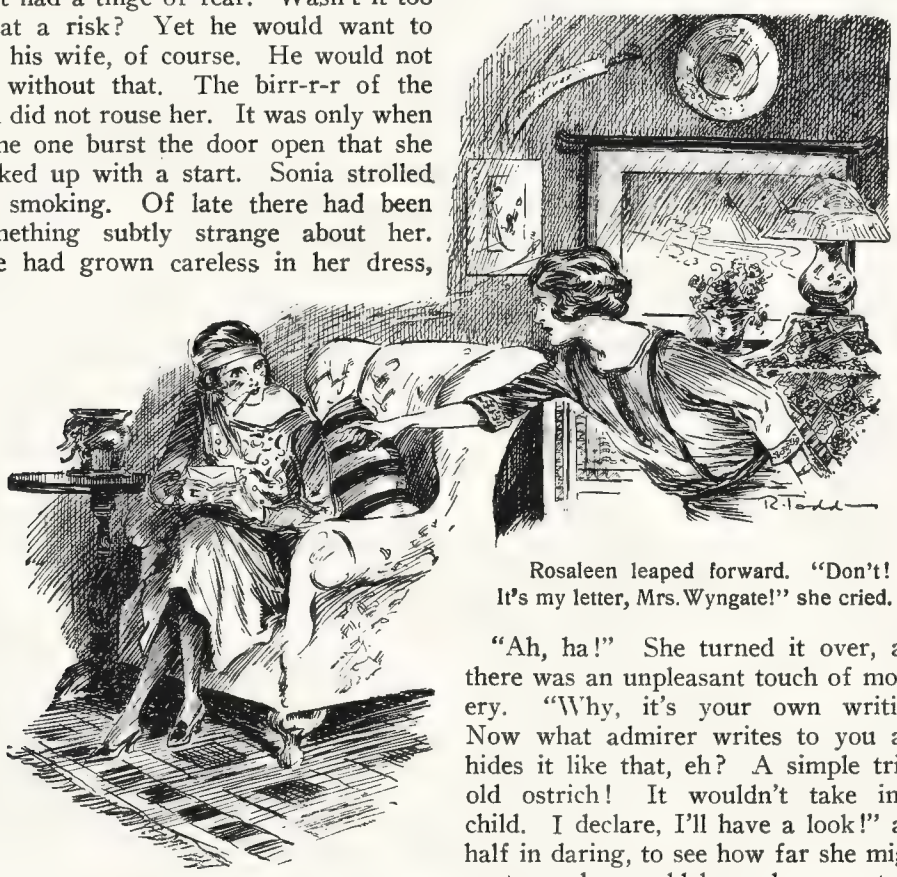
The letter dropped to her lap, and she felt herself thrill with excitement that had a tinge of fear. Wasn't it too great a risk? Yet he would want to see his wife, of course. He would not go without that. The birr-r-r of the bell did not rouse her. It was only when some one burst the door open that she looked up with a start. Sonia strolled in, smoking. Of late there had been something subtly strange about her. She had grown careless in her dress, and her hair was often untidy. Now it looked flattened and disordered by the cushions where she had been lying down.

"Hello, old thing! I thought I'd run you down! No tea, eh?" She flung a glance round the drawing-room. "All right, I'll have a whisky and soda, if you'll offer me one!" She fell into the chair opposite.

Rosaleen shook her head with a smile.

"You know I don't go in for it." Of late a queer suspicion had more than once troubled her. Mrs. Wyngate was certainly indulging too often in stimulants.

As Rosaleen moved, the letter on her lap slipped to the floor, and Sonia craned over and picked it up.

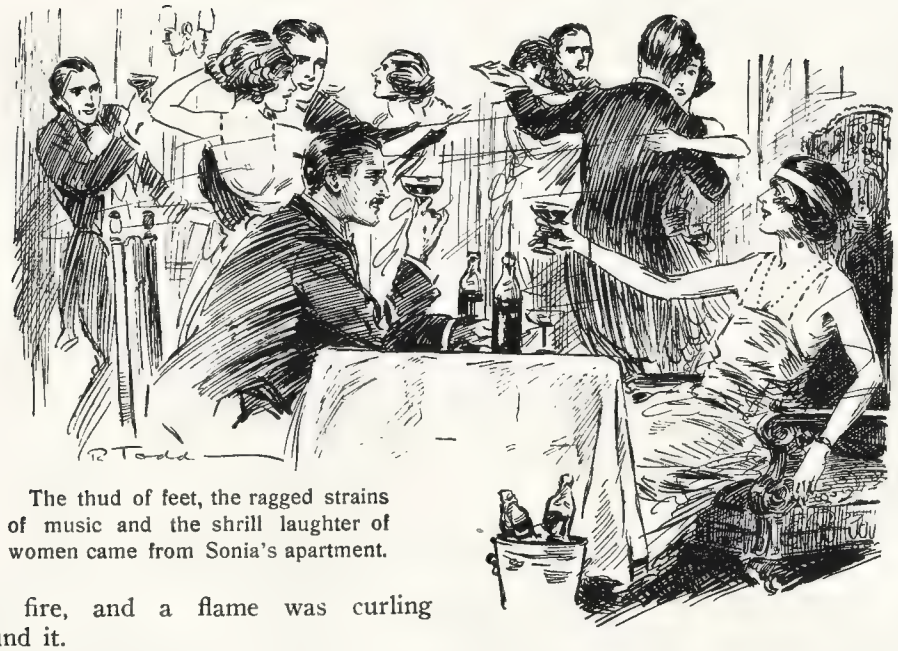


Rosaleen leaped forward. "Don't! It's my letter, Mrs. Wyngate!" she cried.

"Ah, ha!" She turned it over, and there was an unpleasant touch of mockery. "Why, it's your own writing. Now what admirer writes to you and hides it like that, eh? A simple trick, old ostrich! It wouldn't take in a child. I declare, I'll have a look!" and half in daring, to see how far she might venture, she would have drawn out the letter.

"Don't! It's my letter, Mrs. Wyngate!" Rosaleen leaped forward.

Sonia held it on high, still half teasing, half earnest. If she were really to see the letter inside! Rosaleen made a spring. The letter was in her hand. The next minute it lay in the heart of



The thud of feet, the ragged strains of music and the shrill laughter of women came from Sonia's apartment.

the fire, and a flame was curling round it.

"You needn't be so waxy!" Sonia shrugged her shoulders. "I don't want to read your love letters. But I warn you, you're a fool to care about them. They don't come to much, after all. Don't you make a mistake and marry him, whoever he is. That's all. Take it from me, men are cheery enough as friends and lovers. As husbands they're awful failures, the very deuce, I should say!" She leaned forward and kicked the brass fender with her shoe. There was a sneer on her painted lips.

"Look at me, now, if you want warning off the rocks! Just cast your lovely eye at this child! I thought it was all roses and posies, just as you do, I guess! And now I'm a grass widow with a convict husband. And I'm glad to be rid of him! Yes, that's the gospel truth!"

Rosaleen's smothered exclamation was inarticulate, but Sonia turned on her as if she had spoken.

"Oh, I suppose you're rattled, are you? Well, it is the truth! Marriage is a stale game, anyhow. And he was one of the deadly sort. And now I'm shoved aside like a kind of outcast, just because I've a husband who's a thief!" She paused to strike a match on the sole of her preposterously high-heeled suède shoes, and lit another cigarette.

"I tell you I wish I'd never seen him! I was a dashed fool to marry him. I might have had Bobby or Freddy—or—or half a dozen others, if I'd waited! I wish I'd never seen the man, or else that he'd been killed in the war!"

"You must not say such things. You don't know what you are saying!"

Sonia turned upon her somber, heavy-lidded eyes.

"Oh, I know right enough! What kind of a life did he lead me? Always preaching and rotting; always trying to curb my little pleasures! He bored me, I tell you! He bored me to sobs! He bored me to a corpse! And now he's been fool enough to get away out of prison, and be wandering about somewhere. I haven't any peace in my life. One thing, if he had the confounded cheek to try to get hold of me, I'd set the police on his track."

"Hush! I can't listen when you say such outrageous things! You know you don't mean that!"

"Don't I? Wait and see!" She drew her painted lips back from her shining teeth, and Rosaleen thought she was like some picture of a vampire she had seen in a child's book. "Don't I? Why, he'd kill me if he got hold of me! I know him. You don't! He doesn't know I told him a fib about a bill of Valerie's. He doesn't know I got Freddy to settle it. He told me he'd flay me alive if I did! He's the sort that strangles a woman when he finds her out." She looked round uneasily, and now Rosaleen was sure she had been drinking. "Why, the minute he tries to come here—and I've lived in fear of it every minute since I knew he was out of Sing Sing—that very minute I'll phone to the police and give him up!"

"Your husband! You couldn't! You only like to talk!"

"I tell you I would!" Her voice rose shrill and angry. "Why, if people thought he didn't do it, who'd be blamed, do you suppose? They'd try to fasten on somebody, on anybody, almost! They might even think I did it—*I!* That isn't going to happen! He can go back to prison again, and stay there!"

Shocked, horrified, disgusted, Rosaleen listened to her ravings. Was this the woman she had tried to help; to help whom he had asked for her promise? The depths of the tragedy of Wyngate's life lay open before her, and engulfed her with pity and indignation. In that minute she felt that she hated the woman who had brought him to shipwreck. That she drank, Rosaleen had no doubt now. That explained much. But the deep malignity, the hideous callousness, the indifference to his unjust suffering! This was too much.

She got Sonia away presently, and when she had gone she flung wide the windows. It seemed to her as if the little room reeked with evil and ugliness. She felt as if some wicked presence had nestled there while she listened to those ravings. Was the woman mad? Was that the solution? But she knew, as she tried to think, that the real cause lay nearer. If Sonia was mad, it was madness of her own doing.

But Wyngate must not come there! He must be kept away at any cost. The horror of the idea that his own wife would betray him made her shrink and set her teeth. She might carry out her horrible threat in her terror and self-absorption. Rosaleen resolved to write that night to Wyngate and warn him not to risk it.

Late that evening, when the maids had gone to bed, and the Beresford was dark and silent, Rosaleen sat by the dying fire. The pity of it—oh, the pity of it! A man such as Wyngate and a woman such as his wife! No hint of the truth came to her. How should it? She only saw the wrecked marriage, the home that was no home, the woman who had married for what marriage could give her, and was disappointed in the price.

She saw the living man chained to the corpse, that most bitter of all tragic happenings; the brave and the noble and the high-minded mated with the base and the false and the sinful. She understood the debasement of a sacred thing like love. She had gone through unutterable horrors in those war days. She had seen things so terrible to live through that their memory even now caused her to tremble. Yet in all those sights and sounds and doings there had been nothing more dread, more hopeless than the catastrophe that now faced her.

Biddy, in her rectory, poor with the dire poverty of the clergy to-day, working beyond her strength, bending under the burden, was happy in that she had found the real secret of life and happiness. Love made marriage lovely, even

though it was its only gilding. The little faces at the bars of the high nursery window; the tired parson in his shabby coat; the round of cooking and dish-washing and district visiting; if you offered such things to women like Sonia, what would they do but crow with derision? And yet, lacking them, the life each woman made for herself was as dust and ashes, dead leaves on the gale in place of gold.

And what of the women for whom love had never laid its finger on the doors of Eden? Women like herself? They stood without and watched in turn the dwellers, and those who made of themselves exiles.

Toward the end of January, Rosaleen went down to Red Gables for a week-end. She had kept her promise to Aunt Selina, and had often run down to see how the old people were getting on without her. Now the country stretched bleak and gaunt as she drove up from the station. The hedges and the trees lifted ghostly, stripped arms to the pale sky. In the crevices of the garden wall, and along the terrace path, were dirty heaps of snow.

Rose branches swung desolate and empty. In the borders only a snowdrop or two peeped out half afraid. They shoved their thin green spikes up through the wet mold toward the sunlight, and their little ivory-white tops made a glimmer through the trailing ground ivy in the shrubbery.

Along the wet brick paths Rosaleen strolled with Uncle George, her arm through his, as he smoked his beloved short brierwood pipe. She sat by Aunt Selina and taught her a quite new patience. She heard all the doings of the women's club, and how their last entertainment had gone off, and all about the measles in the village.

When she went back on Monday afternoon she felt as if she had been drinking fresh, pure, icy air on a mountain-top after a course of the tables at Monte Carlo! She dined with a friend, and it was late when she drove up in her taxi to the door of the Beresford.

As she put her latchkey into her own door, she heard the sounds of festivity from the apartment opposite. The thud of feet, the ragged strains of discordant music, the shrill laughs and cries that told her Mrs. Wyngate had a jazz party. After she read the letters waiting for her, and drank the tea the maid brought, she went to her room. But still the riot went on across the landing. She could hear it through her open window. It was a good while before she could get to sleep because of it.

It was somewhere in the small, dark hours. How long she had slept she did not know. She woke bolt upright in her bed, answering a voice that spoke to her. Through the dusk of her room she could make out the open door, a lighted square, and against it the dim figure of the maid, saying something over and over.

A Bargain in Hearts

BY VICTOR THORNE
AUTHOR OF "HER DAY"

HER hand bag was gone!

The realization overwhelmed Celia Lawrence. Desperately, she looked along the counter of the telegraph station, and on the floor. But it was nowhere to be seen. Some one had taken it as she bent over to write her telegram. Some one had stolen it. And in it, she had all of her money and her ticket home.

She was alone in New York—unknown—penniless! Weakly, she leaned against the marble counter for support; helplessness and fear almost overcoming her.

"Forty-six cents," said the telegraph operator, counting the words in her telegram.

"I haven't got it! Some one has just taken my bag!" answered Celia through dry lips. She could hardly muster strength enough to speak at all. Terror lay like a great weight on her heart. For she was only nineteen. And she had never been away from home alone before in her life.

"I'll send it 'collect,' then, shall I?" asked the telegraph operator mechanically. She seemed quite unmoved by Celia's plight. The telegram was her only concern.

"No—that won't do," said Celia. "You see, I can't take the train I said I would, unless I find my bag. My ticket was in it."

Big tears welled in her gray eyes, and tangled her long dark lashes; her lips were quivering, but she fought back the sobs.

The telegraph operator languidly handed back Celia's carefully written message—that message over which she had toiled so long that she had failed to observe the thief making off with her bag.

"Better apply to the 'Lost and Found' department," she said indifferently. "It won't do you any good, but you may as well report your loss. They always do. This station is the happy hunting ground for thieves."

Celia moved away from the counter, her message crushed in her hand.

What should she do?

She was miles away from home—miles from her Aunt Agatha, where she had been visiting! She had merely stopped off in New York to change trains. And she didn't know a single person in the whole city. Moreover it was after eight o'clock at night.

She had been lost in Philadelphia, once, as a child, and had appealed to a policeman for aid, and he had taken her to the police station. Celia still remembered the experience vividly, though she had been only five years old at the time. The grim gray room; the hard seats; the policemen in their dreadful uniforms; the prisoners being brought in and assigned to cells—among them a dreadful painted woman who had sworn. She dared not apply to the "Lost and Found" department, now, for fear they would report her case to the police and she would be taken to the police station again. It had been bad enough as a child. To go there, now, was unthinkable. It might get into the newspapers!

Drearily, Celia found her way into the waiting room and sat down.

What could she do? Where could she go? The people waiting for trains would presently go their ways, and she would be left alone. Maybe they'd want to shut the station up! Celia did not know that the great terminal was always open—that trains are arriving day and night from *somewhere*—or *starting* for somewhere. Besides—she guessed that her bag and its contents would never come back to her! She must think of some way out of her awful dilemma! She must find some way out of her predicament!

She looked at the clock. Her train would be starting in five minutes. And she dared not plead with the conductor to let her ride free. She dared not risk refusal and the ensuing humiliation.

Her predicament terrified her.

She began to cry. It was simply impossible to hold back the tears.

"Hello, there? In trouble?" asked a pleasant masculine voice at her elbow.

It sounded very brotherly.

Celia looked up, startled, to find herself facing a very handsome young man in evening clothes, with a huge, fur-collared topcoat over them, and a shining silk hat in his hands. He had sympathetic brown eyes and a charming smile, but Celia had heard too much about affable villains to trust a stranger on such slight acquaintance.

"No!" she gasped defiantly, glaring at him.

"Come, come, now! You're not crying like that just to pass the time!" he protested. And turning to a girl who stood just behind him, he called: *"Ada!"*

The other girl advanced. She was almost as young as Celia, and quite charming in her furry evening wrap. She was sympathetic, too.

"What is it? Surely you can trust me," said the girl, sitting down beside Celia in a friendly fashion.

Celia stared at her and thought she could. After all, these strangers were obviously people of wealth and refinement. They were richly dressed, and the girl wore expensive jewels. What possible reason could they have had for wasting time upon her unless they were really kind and sympathetic?

In any case, Celia decided to tell them, so that if they were scoundrels or rogues they would be warned off.

"Well," she said, reluctantly, "the truth is—I've lost my hand bag. It was stolen a few minutes ago when I was writing a telegram. All my money and my ticket were in it!"

Her voice trembled so that she could hardly get the words out.

"Dear me! That *is* too bad!" said the man.

"And I don't know any one in New York! And I don't know what to do!" wailed Celia, unburdening herself to the fullest.

"Well—*good heavens!* Don't cry again," said Ada, smiling, and patting her arm consolingly. "Ned shall give you enough money for another ticket and you can send it back to him when you get home. That's easily settled. From the way you were weeping, I thought you must be in dreadful difficulties. But now I see that you don't really know what trouble is!"

Celia looked up at her with wide, astonished eyes.

"You don't think it's trouble to be *alone* in New York and *penniless?*" she gasped.

"Inconvenient—that's all," sad Ada, dryly. "Go and buy her a ticket, Ned, please," she added turning to the man, wearily, and then, as an afterthought, turned back to ask: "Where do you live?"

"Philadelphia," answered Celia. "But I can't let him buy me a ticket. I really can't! A *stranger!*"

"Of course you can; you must!" said Ada. "It's such an absurdly little bit of money required, you know. And I can't go off and forget all about you unless you're looked after. You're such a helpless-looking mite!"

She stood up.

"Well, Ned?" she said, impatiently.

"Hold on a bit," said the man, studying Celia thoughtfully. And then he said directly to her: "You're from Philadelphia, you say? Mind telling us your name?"

"No," said Celia, hesitatingly. "It's Celia Lawrence."

"*Miss* Celia Lawrence?" he asked.

"Of *course!* I'm only nineteen. I'm just out of school."

Celia had to smile, and when she smiled, they saw a flashing row of even white teeth, and two perfectly enchanting dimples.

"Well, Miss Celia Lawrence," said the man. "You're in trouble. This lady, here, is in trouble, too, more serious trouble than yours, unfortunately. She was willing to help you. I wonder if you would be willing to help her?"

"Ned!" cried the other girl, protestingly.

"It's all right. Let me explain things to her. It can't do any harm, and I've got an idea," he answered firmly.

"Of course I'd be glad to help if I could," said Celia honestly.

"You could if you wanted to," said the man. "All you'd have to do would be to marry me to-night!"

"What?" gasped Celia, utterly amazed.

And the other girl cried again, in helpless tones: "*Ned,* for pity's sake! What wild idea——"

"It's not a wild idea—it's as simple as anything," insisted the man eagerly. "Miss Lawrence," he went on, turning to Celia, "my name is Edward Shields. This lady is Mrs. John Lattimer. She is my foster sister. That is, her father adopted me when I was a boy, so that although we are not related by blood, we have grown up like sister and brother. Two years ago, my sister—as I have always called her—fell in love and married John Lattimer.

"A year ago, our father died, leaving his fortune to my sister and naming me as executor of the estate.

"It was an old will, you see, made before my sister's marriage, hence her husband was not made executor. Now, although a sterling and admirable fellow, Mr. Lattimer is exceedingly jealous by nature—and on account of the frequent interviews I have had to have with Mrs. Lattimer in settling up the estate, he has been foolish enough to imagine that we care for each other, not quite as brother and sister should.

"He is absurdly, cruelly wrong in his suspicions.

"Mrs. Lattimer is devoted to him. I care for her and always shall as a devoted brother. But the situation has become intolerable. In fact, goaded by his jealousy, Mr. Lattimer is now

threatening to leave his wife. And she, in despair, has met me here to-night to urge me to go away and not see her or communicate with her again.

"Unfortunately, the estate is not yet settled. I cannot believe that Mr. Lattimer's mind would be set at rest by my going away. I am so fond of my sister, I want to restore peace and happiness to her home if I can possibly do so; therefore, I have hit upon the plan of announcing my marriage to somebody else!"

"But Ned, what a preposterous plan!" cried his sister.

"Not at all preposterous! Quite simple and conclusive. If I am married to another woman, John will realize that I cannot be in love with you!"

"But even if you do marry, why marry Miss Lawrence—a perfect stranger?"

"Why not?" asked the man, smiling. "I'm not in love with anybody else. And Miss Lawrence is young, attractive, and unknown. I can convince John that I have been courting Miss Lawrence for some time. I can make him believe we eloped together from Philadelphia to-night. If I married some girl in our own set, John would know that it was a hastily planned affair, and he might suspect that it is a ruse."

Celia stared from one to the other with incredulous eyes. She could hardly credit her senses.

Marry this man whom she had never seen before in her life? Marry him? It was the maddest thing she had ever heard of.

"Miss Lawrence," went on Ned Shields quietly. "I must tell you that I am a wealthy man. As my wife, you would live well. Clothes, jewels, servants, motors, travel, theaters, opera, society; these things would be yours so long as you lived in my house as my wife. You would be wife in name only, understand. And if, at any time, you should fall in love I would release you from this arrangement and make you free to contract another alliance. What do you say?"

"All you'd have to do would be to marry me to-night!" said the big, handsome stranger, looking at Celia, stranded, penniless.

Celia caught her breath.

Never before had she been so bewildered, and frightened and delighted and terrified. Here was adventure with a capital A. Here was romance! For years she had read of things like this in books, but she had never dreamed that they could actually happen. And it was happening to her! A man she did not know was asking her to marry him. He was offering her clothes, jewels, servants, motor cars, travel, theaters, opera, society.

She thought of her mother and her three little sisters. She was the eldest of the lot, and their father was dead. Mrs. Lawrence was the breadwinner of the family, poor drudging soul! She was a seamstress, although she barely earned enough to keep them all. There was always some one sick, or repairs were needed on their home they were trying to buy.

She had sent Celia on a visit to her sister's, in order to lighten her load a bit. What a relief it would be to her to have Celia married! And to have her married well. She would be able to help out a bit at home, perhaps.

Of course, it would be a dreadful risk. It would be a hazardous thing to marry a strange man like this. But he was good-looking, and kind—which was better yet.

"Well?" he asked, catching her appraising eyes.

"Could I have money—to help out my mother?" she asked. "I mean, as your wife. I suppose I'd have something of my own—to do as I liked, if you're rich?"

"Assuredly," agreed Shields, smiling. "I'd be willing to make you a very generous allowance."

"And could I see my family now and then or have one of them visit me, maybe?"

She was getting ready to make the plunge.

"Of course!" nodded Shields.

Celia drew a long breath.

"*Then*——" she said, "I'll *do* it! Maybe I'm a little fool, but it's awfully hard to earn money. And mother's had a dreadful time. I might never have a chance like this again. It would be nice to be rich, if only for a little while."

She lifted her eyes to him. She was blushing, trembling, smiling bravely.

"This is madness, I tell you, madness," protested Ada, weakly. And then she caught Celia impulsively in her arms and hugged her, adding: "But I admire your courage, you poor little frightened, courageous *martyr*. And I hope you'll be happy!"

"I'll do everything I can to make her so," said Shields.

The rest of the night was a wild delirium to Celia. The three of them motored into New Jersey and found a minister and persuaded him to perform the ceremony. Mrs. Lattimer and the minister's wife acted as witnesses. Then they returned to New York and sent a telegram to Celia's mother. It read:

> Was married to Edward Shields to-night. Letter on the way explaining. Love.
>
> CELIA.

When the message was dispatched, they had supper. Celia was famished. Then they taxied to the big house on the avenue which was to be Celia's new home.

Her eyes grew wide as she looked at the mansion of white stone, with grilled iron gates guarding the entrance. Servants in livery were at the door.

Mrs. Lattimer had taken leave of them as they left the restaurant where they had supped, so Celia and Shields were alone when they entered the big house.

"Bigelow," said Shields, to the man at the door, "I've brought home my wife. She will have the rose suite. Tell Baker, please."

"Welcome, Mrs. Shields," said the

old butler, beaming. "I'll tell Mrs. Baker at once, sir. I wish you happiness I'm sure, sir, if I may make so bold!"

"Thank you, Bigelow," said Shields, while Celia smiled.

"We must let them think it is a love-match," whispered her husband, as the old servant disappeared. "Most of the gossip one hears travels through servants."

Celia nodded, her eyes wandering in amazement over the luxurious fittings of the enormous hall. She had never seen such thick, soft silky rugs, such heavy damask hangings, such rich toned pictures. A wood fire burned in the big open grate, lending an air of cozy warmth to the place.

"Let me show you through your new home, my dear," said Shields, with a quizzical smile that turned the words of endearment into a half jest. And he led her through the little formal reception room, to the big quiet library, its walls stocked with books, then into the drawing-room, music room, dining room, all marvelously decorated and impressive. The rose suite was on the fourth floor, occupying the entire space. It was delightful. Celia gave a little cry of delight when she saw it. It was done in exquisite fresh rose tints. It was all that she could ask.

"Am I to have these rooms? Am I to live here?" questioned the girl.

"Celia Lawrence *Shields,*" said her husband, smiling.

She turned to him, her gray eyes shining, curling tendrils of copper brown hair escaping from beneath her trim blue hat; her red lips parted.

"I can't believe all this is really true. It's too wonderful!" She breathed rapturously. "Things like this don't happen!"

"But they do to good little girls like you," answered Shields gently. And then he added, "I'm going to leave you, now. If you are lonely, get Baker to stay with you. You'll like Baker, she's a motherly old soul—been with us for centuries. To-morrow, we'll go shopping and all that. Meanwhile, ask Baker for anything you need. We'll meet at breakfast, eh?"

"Oh—yes," said Celia.

"Good! I'll see that you are called in time. Good night!"

"Good night," said Celia as he left the room.

She moved slowly about, gazing right and left, as in a dream. Her eyes wandered over chiffony hangings, satin cushions and coverlets, white bearskin rugs, dainty water colors and pastels in carved gold frames. She felt like a princess in a fairy-tale—like Cinderella at the ball. She wondered when twelve o'clock was going to strike.

Crossing to the writing desk, Celia drew the monogrammed stationery toward her and began a letter to her mother. It was her monogram, too, now—"S." Shields! Celia Shields! She liked the name! She liked the man, too. She thought how perfect everything would be if she fell in love with him—and he with her. He was certainly more handsome than any other man she had known.

Celia began her letter—telling her mother everything. She was in the midst of it, when "Baker" arrived to pay her respects and offer her services. She was a sweet-faced, gray-haired woman who had once been Ned's nurse and was now housekeeper in his big establishment. Celia adored her at sight.

Baker gave her a nightgown and slippers and a negligee. Celia's trunk had been checked straight through to Philadelphia by Aunt Agatha. Celia did not want Baker to know about the strangeness of the wedding. Baker had assumed that it was a runaway love-match, and she had told her about Master Ned as a boy. Celia assumed that she adored Master Ned.

She awoke to find the sun shining and Baker's cheery face smiling at her. She was to breakfast with Ned in her little rose-colored sitting room. Roses, lovely fresh roses, nodded from the center of the intimate little table, and shed their fragrance everywhere. Then came the papers, with front-page columns about Edward Shields' elopement. He had given out the news the night before by telephone. He had lied shamelessly about his lengthy courtship of Celia, her mother's opposition to the match, a rival, a French count and a hurried flight by automobile to have the knot tied. They laughed over it together, as Ned read it all aloud and patted himself on the back for the extravagance of his invention. But Mrs. Baker and the other servants took it seriously. Ned's friends began to gather around the new bride in droves, urging invitations to teas and luncheons and dinners and dances. Celia found herself caught in the mad whirl of society.

Meanwhile, Ned remained steadfastly by her side, her ever-present, ever-attentive, gallant cavalier. He played the devoted lover perfectly, whether they were in shops selecting finery for Celia, or at the theater or in the homes of his friends. He was so devoted, in fact, that Celia often doubted herself that his attitude was assumed. When left alone together all doubts vanished, for alone with her, he became at once different, friendly but distant.

John Lattimer and his wife came to dine with them the first week. Celia studied with interest this jealous husband who had been responsible for all of her god fortune. He was a shrewd, middle-aged man, a power on Wall Street; a dominating figure even in a drawing-room. Older than his wife, he had swept her off her feet her first season in society by his persistent and ardent devotion. Ada Lattimer had been congratulated upon the splendid

Celia was in fairyland. Anything in the shops was hers.

match. But Celia, observing the Lattimers together, wondered if Ada still loved her husband—if she were happy with him. It did not seem to Celia that her attitude indicated happiness. Later, when the two women withdrew from the dining room, her impression was strengthened by Mrs. Lattimer's behavior.

Gazing critically at the transformed Celia, who was dressed in palest yellow satin that contrasted strikingly with her coppery hair, she asked:

"Well? Are you falling in love with your husband, my dear?"

Celia blushed.

"Any girl might," she admitted. "He's certainly worthy!"

A look flashed into Ada Lattimer's eyes. It startled Celia.

"Yes—he's worthy," she admitted. And then, she added abruptly, but very earnestly, "But you are *not* worthy, my dear—not of *him!* Don't fall in love with him, I beg of you! No happiness can come of it! Oh, I wish I had never

countenanced this mad scheme at all! But I was helpless."

She turned away then, very sharply, leaving Celia staring.

Did Ada Lattimer really love him, then? Did he perhaps love her, too? Was that why he had gone to such lengths to safeguard her reputation and quiet Lattimer's jealousy? Was that why he adhered so strictly to the terms of his bargain with her? It was possible. After all, they were only foster brother and sister—no blood relations! But Ada was *married!* She was married to another man!

Lattimer and Ned came in, and Celia was forced to put the troublesome thought out of her head. The pain of it lingered at her heart, long after the Lattimers had gone.

Their life together went on. When he was with her in public, no lover could have been more attentive, more devoted. He scarcely took his eyes off her face, he crushed her close in dancing, and brushed her cheek tenderly. He danced with her at every opportunity. He watched anxiously for drafts and drew her furs about her shoulders before she herself noticed the need of them. He was always first to pick up the gold mesh bag and vanity case that she was forever dropping.

But how different when they were alone? He was polite, courteous always, but not in the least loverlike. Celia often had to hide the ready tears at the change.

The second day of her stay in his house, Shields had presented Celia with a bank book, showing a very substantial sum to her credit. He had urged her to draw checks for any sum she required for her own use or the use of her family. Celia had joyfully forwarded more than half of the money to her mother. Thereupon Mrs. Lawrence had made a hurried trip to New York to see for herself just how Celia was situated. She had met Ned and Mrs. Baker, had approved them both and had departed happily after luncheon, praying that the usual marry-in-haste proverb would not apply to this marriage. Her parting injunction to Celia was: "Be a good girl, Celia!" Then she went back to look after the rest of her family. Thanks to Celia, life had become suddenly pleasant after years of struggle and toil.

The fourth week of her married life, Celia met Ada Lattimer again. Mrs. Lattimer came to tea, this time, and Celia received her in the big drawing-room. Celia looked fresh and lovely, in an afternoon frock of silver gray. She advanced warmly to meet her guest but Mrs. Lattimer was very cool. The affectionate sympathy she had displayed in the railroad station when first they met was no longer in evidence. She looked upon Celia as a rival, now.

"I am afraid what I am going to say will seem unpleasant," she began as they sat down facing each other, "but you have so obviously misunderstood Ned—his intentions—the whole situation—that I felt some one must undeceive you, and there was no one else to do it but me. When Ned proposed this marriage, you know, he did not intend it to go on indefinitely. He meant you to remain here just long enough to relieve my husband's mind of his jealous suspicions. That result has been achieved long ago but you do not go."

"Go?" repeated Celia staring. "Do you mean that he meant me to leave as soon as your husband's doubts had been set at rest?"

"Assuredly," said Ada Lattimer quietly. "What else did you suppose?"

"But he never told *me*," said Celia slowly.

Her heart almost stopped beating, so great was the weight of pain that descended on it at the other woman's words.

"Of course he would not tell you!" protested Mrs. Lattimer. "He is too

kind, too courteous. He is a gentleman! He would never think of turning you out of his house. Still, a bargain is a bargain.

"Even though you are very cozy and comfortable here, it is rather taking advantage of his good nature to stay on indefinitely, don't you think?

"The tactful thing to do would be to go home on a visit, *and not come back!* It isn't as if he loved you, you know. No man wants to be tied down forever to a woman he doesn't love."

Tears sprang to Celia's eyes. Her castle of dreams collapsed. It was all so true, so obvious. She had been taking too much for granted. She had understood that he would tell her if he wanted her to go. Now she realized that he would never have told her. He could never have brought himself to be so cruel, knowing the life from which she had come—the poverty and hardships.

"Oh—you are right! I see it, now! I shouldn't have stayed so long. But I didn't stop to think! I've been so happy here."

The tears rolled down Celia's face. Suddenly Mrs. Lattimer's heart warmed toward her. But she steeled herself against this sympathy.

"You'll be just as happy at home again, I'm sure," said Mrs. Lattimer, "in your own world, among your own people. Ned will see that you never want for anything I know!"

She rose and nodded.

"You'll go at once, without submitting him to the embarrassment of a farewell interview?" I hope.

"Of course," answered Celia, humbly. She attempted a smile.

"Good-by, then," said Mrs. Lattimer.

"Good-by!"

Mrs. Lattimer passed out, feeling anything but happy over her accomplishment. Celia went slowly upstairs. With an aching heart, she rang for Baker to pack her trunk.

"I'm going home on a visit," she told the old housekeeper, as cheerfully as she could, in order to avoid gossip and speculation among the servants. But old Mrs. Baker sensed the aching heart. In the midst of the packing, while Celia was busy changing her clothes, the old housekeeper slipped down to the library and called Ned on the telephone.

He answered immediately.

"Something has happened, Master Ned," she said. "Mrs. Lattimer came to tea and now Mrs. Shields is packing and she says she is going away——"

"Going away?" cried Ned. "Nonesense! Don't let her! I'll grab a taxi and come right up! Detain her somehow, Baker, till I get there!"

"I'll do my best, sir," said Mrs. Baker earnestly.

Celia met Ned's eyes bravely. "I'm going away," she said. "And I'm not coming back at all."

She went back to the rose suite and continued packing. Never before in the history of the world did any trunks take so long. It was in vain that Celia urged her on, lending a hand to hurry things. Baker folded and refolded garments, put them in and took them out and rearranged them. She wasted as much time as she possibly could. But at last, the trunks were packed, and Ned had not come. The taxi that was to take Celia to the station stood outside. She put on her coat and sat down at the little desk in the corner to write him a word of explanation. And then——

"Hello!" boomed his voice suddenly, from the doorway. "Going away?"

Celia turned, her color deepening, her lips parting, her eyes misty with tears.

"Yes," she said, as pleasantly as she could, "to Philadelphia, on a visit!"

"Going to stay long?" asked Ned casually, drawing nearer.

Celia could not bring herself to lie. Mrs. Baker had slipped away. There was no need for concealment.

"Yes," said Celia, meeting his eyes bravely. "I'm not coming back at all!"

"Not—coming back?" repeated Ned. *"Why?"*

"Because the purpose of our marriage is accomplished. Mr. Lattimer no longer doubts his wife. There's no longer any reason for me staying."

"Isn't there?" asked Ned, in a low voice.

She made no answer.

"Aren't you—happy here?" he asked.

"Oh—yes," said Celia, "but—you—you——" She could not go on.

"I?" cried Ned. "Why I have never been so happy before in my life. The only thing that has marred my happiness has been that cursed agreement between us forbidding me to make love to you Celia. I'm mad about you. I adore you. If you go away, life won't be worth living."

"Do you mean it?" asked Celia, breathlessly, gazing into his eyes.

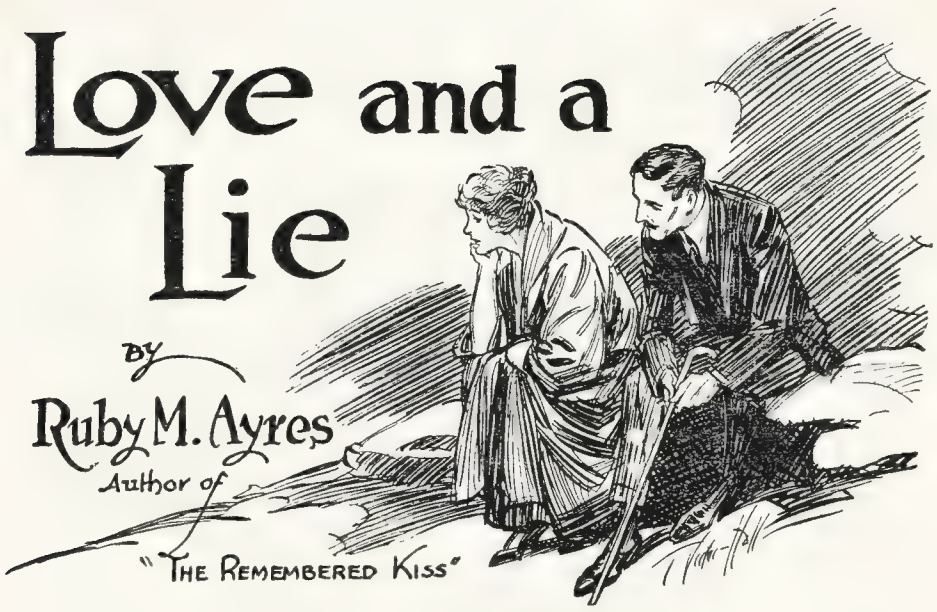
"With all my heart," said Ned, his voice not quite steady, though confident.

Celia sobbed in his arms.

"It's like a fairy-tale," she said, "even the ending!"

And then her husband kissed her.

Love and a Lie



By Ruby M. Ayres

Author of "The Remembered Kiss"

THIS IS THE STORY SO FAR:

At a fashionable New Jersey watering place Roger Buchanan, wealthy New York clubman, becomes engaged to Cecilie Vanstone, a Brooklyn clerk. He meets with disapproval from Louise Buchanan, the scheming wife of his brother Philip. The day after Roger vows his love to Cecilie, his wife, whom he thought long dead, appears. She is Rosa Desmond, the dancer. Instead of telling Cecilie the truth, Roger hopes to spare her, so he lies about his love and denies it. The girl is furious and heartbroken.

CHAPTER VIII—(*Continued.*)

"OH, my poor dear, what is it? What has happened?" she asked quiveringly. Kathy had no imagination, but she read tragedy in the other girl's eyes and ashen face.

"He's made a fool of me!" Her voice sounded old and cracked. "He never cared for me; it was all pretense last night—all fooling. He's just the cad I said he was when we first came here."

"Cecilie!" There was honest indignation in Kathy's voice. She could not believe this. Buchanan, who had been so kind to them both! Buchanan, who had given her those lovely boxes of chocolates! Buchanan, who—— "Oh, Cecilie, what *are* you saying?" she protested.

Cecilie pushed her aside.

"I know what I'm saying. He overheard what I said to you that evening in the drawing-room. Do you remember? I was raving against them all, and he heard. He's just done this to get even with me, to humble me."

She sat back on her heels; the hands which Buchanan had so passionately kissed only last night, hung loosely at her sides. For the moment all vitality seemed to have left her body. Her eyes stared with blank incredulity at the half empty box before her. The black evening frock lay tumbled on top of the other things; it looked curiously limp and shabby, shorn of the veil of romance with which last night had endowed it.

Suddenly Cecilie clenched her hands, her white face flushed into passionate life and hatred.

"Oh, if I could kill him. If only I could *kill* him!" she moaned bitterly.

She buried her face in her arms.

CHAPTER IX.

CECILIE COMES HOME.

ROGER BUCHANAN came into lunch when nearly every one else had finished. Philip was making an attack on a very ripe piece of Camembert; Louise was twisting the stem of her water glass nervously. When she saw her brother-in-law crossing the lounge through the open door, she rose hastily, threw down her napkin, and left the room. Even her iron fortitude could not face him at that moment.

She and her husband had both noticed the empty table where Kathy and Cecilie usually sat.

"Do you think he has told her?" Mrs. Buchanan asked nervously.

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know. Saw them on the beach together just now. Poor old Roger."

"Such sentimental rubbish!" Louise protested vigorously. But she avoided meeting Roger herself.

He came into the room without noticing her hurried exit, and sat down next to his brother. A waiter came up attentively.

"Soup, sir?"

"Yes. No—no, I don't want any soup. I don't want anything."

"Try the lobster," suggested Philip sympathetically. "It's exceptionally good."

"All right—lobster," said his brother.

The waiter brought the most tempting morsel he could coax from the chef, but Roger left it untouched. He, too, had seen the empty table where Cecilie generally sat.

"It was fine in the water this morning," said Philip, in an effort to rouse his brother. "I took the youngster in—not a bit afraid of the waves! Went out on my back with all the confidence in the world."

He waited for comment, but Roger seemed not to have heard.

"He'll swim in another day or two," Robbie's father went on delightedly. "Come in with us to-morrow, will you?"

No answer. Roger was staring out of the window with blank eyes. Philip pushed the cheese to one side.

"Buck up, old scout," he said in an undertone.

Roger started and took up a fork. He ate a piece of the lobster, and then forgot it again.

"They haven't been in to lunch," he said at length, indicating the empty table. He paused. "Does she know?" he asked awkwardly.

"The truth? No. I just—just told her it was all off."

Roger pushed back his chair impatiently. "Let's get out," he said in a stifled voice.

The brothers went into the lounge together. A group of girls, of whom Miss Smee was the center, called to them invitingly. Roger did not glance at them; Philip called back some chaffing remark.

There was a knot of people in the open doorway; the big hotel bus stood outside in the drive.

"Some one leaving?" asked Philip casually.

Miss Smee nodded.

"Miss Vanstone and Company," she said in a stage whisper.

"What?" Philip stopped. "Miss Vanstone?" he asked.

"Yes." Miss Smee's sharp eyes looked after Roger. "Have they had a row?" she asked pertinently.

Philip was standing open-mouthed; he had not bargained for this. He wondered if his brother knew.

Roger had nearly reached the door. In a few quick strides Philip overtook him.

"Let's go out the other way," he said hurriedly. "I want to show you something."

Buchanan looked back at him.

"Let's see the bus go first," he answered aimlessly. "Who's leaving? Any one interesting?"

He spoke for the sake of speaking; there was only one person in the hotel whose movements were of the least interest to him—and she had gone out of his life forever.

Philip answered hurriedly.

"I don't know. Nobody much. Come on."

A man, standing near, who had overheard Roger's question, looked round.

"It's Miss Vanstone and her friend," he said.

Relating the incident that evening in the billiard room, he told an interested audience that Buchanan looked as if some one had struck him a knock-out blow.

"Never saw a chap go so white in my life," he said dramatically. "Don't tell *me* he wasn't sweet on Miss Vanstone! I know better!"

While the crowd were discussing the thing that was breaking her heart, Cecilie was whirling toward New York. She sat slumped dejectedly in her seat, her eyes hard and lips close pressed. She was wondering how she could ever, *ever* drag herself through all the years of life still left to her.

From the window of her expensive private sitting room in the hotel, Louise Buchanan had watched the heavy bus rumble down the road to the station.

She knew quite well whom it bore away, for she had encountered Cecilie in the lounge when she came out of the dining room to avoid Roger.

Cecilie was obviously dressed for traveling. She wore a plain serge suit and a soft felt hat. Kathy stood beside her, flushed and unhappy looking, with unmistakable marks of tears on her face.

Mrs. Buchanan hesitated when she saw them; then with a sudden spiteful impulse she rustled toward Cecilie.

"Are you going away, Miss Vanstone?" she asked in a high, artificial voice of dismay. "Isn't it a very sudden decision? I am sure my brother-in-law does not know."

The eyes of the entire lounge were upon Cecilie, but the girl held her head high.

For a moment she looked her enemy full in the eyes, then without the slightest sign of recognition she turned her back and walked away.

Louise turned scarlet with rage; she could have killed herself for having spoken to the girl at all. Had it been possible, she would have forgotten her dignity, and rushed after her screaming vituperation in her fury. She went up to her own room and watched till the bus had driven off, then she put on her hat and ordered the car, or rather Roger's car, which she used as her own.

She drove down into the town as far as she dared be seen; then she dismissed the motor and went the rest of the way on foot.

Soon she was ringing at the house at which Roger himself had called only that morning. When the maid-of-all-work, summoned from the kitchen in too much haste to wipe her black hands, answered, Louise asked in her haughty voice for Mrs. Roger Buchanan.

"There ain't nobody of that name here," she said.

Louise frowned.

"Is there a Miss Desmond, then?" she asked.

The girl's face brightened.

"Oh, yes!" she said cheerfully. She invited the grand lady in, and left her in the narrow hall, with its striped linoleum and rickety hatrack, while she journeyed upstairs.

On the landing above the visitor heard a whispered colloquy, and after a moment the servant came back.

"Miss Desmond is resting." She had obviously been coached. "Will you please send a message?"

"My errand is private and important," Mrs. Buchanan asserted. She raised her voice sufficiently for any one on the landing above to hear what she was saying. "I can wait if Miss Desmond is resting; but I really must see her."

Another trip up the stairs, and another whispered conversation resulted in a request that Mrs. Buchanan would "step in."

It was twenty minutes by Louise's diamond-set watch before a creak on the steps was followed by a turning of the handle, and Roger's wife stood on the threshold.

She had obviously dressed herself for the part. She wore a striking printed crêpe de Chine gown, which suited her admirably. High-heeled shoes peeped below the hem, and a glimpse of very openwork stockings.

Louise rose from the uncomfortable chair where she had been sitting staring out of the window. She advanced with outstretched hand.

"You are Roger's wife, are you not?"

Rosa Desmond stood stock-still; a shade of suspicion crossed her beautiful face.

Louise smiled.

"I am his brother's wife, you know," she said pleasantly. "Philip's wife. You know Philip, don't you? He spoke to you last night after the performance. We enjoyed it *so* much; your dancing is beautiful!"

There was a little silence. The actress looked at the elder woman with cool assurance.

"Won't you sit down?" she said.

She was not one whit deceived by this apparent friendliness; her quick brain was merely wondering what was its cause, what this woman wanted.

"I suppose Roger didn't send you, did he?" she asked.

"Well, no." Louise was somewhat taken aback. "But of course we all know the romantic story."

"It's not romantic at all," interrupted the other coolly. "Roger hates me as the devil hates holy water. He thought I was dead. He was honest enough to say that he hoped I was. If he did not send you, why have you come?"

Her lovely brown eyes rested with a sort of triumph on the other woman's hot, flushed face. Louise had not bargained for this; she did not know how to respond.

"I don't know that I'm not sorry for Roger," the other went on suddenly. "He's a good chap, really. He made a fool of himself when he married me. If he's sent you here to make terms with me, tell him I'll not be unreasonable. I don't want to bother him. I've let him alone for ten years, and I'm not likely to worry him now. I can make a decent amount of money myself, and I refused to take his when he offered it this morning; but I've thought it over since, and I think I was a bit of a fool. You can tell Roger that I'm quite content to lie low if he likes to make it worth my while." She sat down on the edge of the table, and stuck her feet upon the seat of a chair. "I'll take fifty thousand dollars," she said affably. At that moment there was something hopelessly common and degenerate about her, in spite of her undoubted beauty. Louise Buchanan sat motionless.

"You might tell him, too," the other went on slowly, as if she were weighing each word, "that—well, there is such a thing as getting rid of me *permanently*. See?" She winked portentously.

"What do you mean?" asked Louise curiously.

Rosa laughed.

"D-i-v-o-r-c-e." She spelled the word slowly.

Mrs. Buchanan rose in agitation.

"But, my dear woman," she said in exasperation, "that's exactly what we all want to avoid. Roger *wants* his

freedom. Didn't he tell you? Didn't he tell you there was another woman in the question? He got engaged to her, thinking you were dead. She's nobody, a girl he met here in the hotel. If he marries her it means ruin for us all. I have a son; it has always been an understood thing that he will be Roger's heir. If he is free of you, and can marry again, my boy will be an absolute beggar."

Louise's voice was tragic. She really believed that she was an object for pity. Rosa listened quietly; there was a faint scorn in her velvety eyes.

"Lord!" she said at last, when the other stopped. "What a lot of sharks poor old Roger's got for relatives." She sat silent for a moment, her chin in the cup of her hand. Then:

"So there's another woman in it, is there?" she said slowly.

She was looking far back into the summer when she first knew Roger. He was only a boy then, a boy of whom she had soon wearied, and yet—compared with the jaded life she had lived since she parted with him, those early days of foolish passion seemed very sweet and to be desired.

A sort of sullen jealousy crept into her face. A moment ago she had expressed herself willing to leave Roger alone, to take herself out of his life; but now the fact that there was another woman whom he wanted seemed to give an entirely different aspect to the question.

"What's she like?" she asked abruptly.

"Oh, nothing to look at—just a shop-girl, and dowdy. She ran after Roger from the first day they met. You know how weak men are. Of course she knew he was rich. She liked being taken out in his car. She fancied herself as Mrs. Roger Buchanan!" added Louise artfully.

"Oh, *did* she?" Rosa's voice was hot with scorn.

She sat up very straight, her level brows frowning, a spot of angry color in either cheek. Across ten dividing years she was listening to the voice of the boy Roger, as she had heard it on their wedding day, remembering how he had lifted her hand with its new wedding ring, and kissed it.

"Mrs. Roger Buchanan—my wife!" he had said softly.

And now there was another woman whom he loved. Louise was quick to see the change in the beautiful face before her, quick to guess at the sullen, dog-in-the-manger love that the knowledge of a rival had roused in her heart. She pressed her case capably.

"She's the sort of woman Roger would never be happy with," she declared plaintively. "She's quite, *quite* unsuited to him. I am *fond* of Roger."

"Humph!" said Rosa dryly. "I should say you *are!*"

Louise rose to her feet. She felt that further subterfuge was impossible.

"Look here, Miss Desmond," she said. "Let us be honest with each other. You don't wish Roger to have his freedom any more than I do. You wouldn't care to see him married again, would you, to a woman without even your beauty to recommend her?"

"Thanks!" said Rosa, with sarcasm.

"I want my son to inherit his uncle's wealth. Roger will soon forget this woman once he finds it's impossible to marry her. And you—why, you can get much, *much* more out of him than fifty thousand dollars. His income must be at least double that a year. I'll stand by you, if you'll stand by me. Is it a bargain?"

The velvety brown eyes withdrew themselves from the little narrow street and fixed themselves on Louise Buchanan's face.

"We're both a pair of rotters," she said bluntly. "But I'm not so sure that *you're* not worse than me."

Louise flushed dully.

"You may think what you like," she said recklessly, "if you'll help me keep Roger from this woman." She held out her perfectly gloved hand; it trembled with eagerness. "Is it a bargain?" she asked.

Rosa looked at it. Suddenly she laughed shrilly.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," she said carelessly.

CHAPTER X.

BACK HOME.

Kathy never forgot that journey back to New York. In after years it stood out as the most tragic spot in the whole of her colorless life.

She kept watching her companion wistfully. After the first bitter outburst Cecilie had held her peace. She would not talk of what had happened. She said that she never wished to hear Buchanan's name again. Just before they left the hotel she had walked down to the edge of the sea and thrown something far out into the blue water. Kathy knew what it was—a dead rose which Roger had given to her one night to wear in the shabby evening frock. He had kissed it before he gave it to her. Cecilie had kissed it many times since.

With a sudden impulse Kathy leaned forward.

"Cecilie," she said in a troubled voice, laying her hand on the younger girls, "Cecilie, are you sure you are not making a mistake, dear? I can't somehow believe it. I can't believe that he has just been pretending all this time. He didn't *look* as if he were pretending; he was always so nice."

Cecilie did not answer.

Kathy went on:

"I wish now that I had spoken to him myself. I meant to, only we went away in such a hurry. I can't help feeling sure there is some explanation, if only——"

Cecilie's eyes flashed.

"The only explanation is that I've been a fool!" she said in a hard voice. "I want to forget it. Kathy, you're never to speak to me about him again. Never speak about this vacation at all. I ought never to have come, I know. It's not your fault; you tried to persuade me against it. We ought to have gone off contentedly to Long Beach——" She broke off with a little shudder. "Kathy," she went on vehemently, "if ever you write to Mr. Buchanan, or try to see him, or speak to him again, I'll never forgive you as long as you live! Do you hear me?"

"It's not at all likely that I should," her friend protested. "But if it had been me, I should have made sure first, quite sure that——"

"What surer proof could I have than his own words?" cried Cecilie passionately. "A man doesn't admit that he has behaved like a cad and a brute just for fun, does he?" She flung out her hands with a gesture of helplessness. "For Heaven's sake let us talk about something else. It's all over and done with. I never mean to think of him again."

Brave sounding words, when her heart was torn and bleeding. Kathy took up her book resignedly.

"I can't help thinking it will all come right some day," she said vaguely, without knowing what made her think so.

Cecilie turned on her fiercely.

"It never will," she declared. "If he came to me on his knees now, if he begged me on his knees, I would rather *die* than ever look at him or believe in him again."

After this outburst Cecilie leaned back with her eyes closed. There was a hard look of pain about her mouth. Kathy sighed and opened the book.

The train sped on toward New York. The hot afternoon sun flooded the coach and made it unpleasantly stuffy. Once

Kathy rose and pulled a blind to screen herself, but Cecilie did not stir or open her eyes.

Her mind was going over again, hour by hour, the few short days she had known Roger, from the first moment he had followed and spoken to her.

How clever he had been! So clever that never by word or action had he allowed her to suspect that he was anything but genuine. She recalled hours she had spent in his company; the way he had looked at her, the tone of his voice, the touch of his hand, the fold of his arms only last night when he had kissed her. A little moan escaped her.

Kathy leaned across.

"Cecilie, are you dreaming? Wake up!"

"I'm not asleep," said Cecilie. She opened her eyes and looked out at the flying country. The heat of the day had increased. She felt hot and weak. Little drops of moisture stood on her forehead. She looked across at Kathy, placid and sedate, and a throb of envy shot through her. Kathy would never know the meaning of such suffering as that which was now consuming her. Great passion would never come Kahty's way. For the first time in her life, she envied her friend.

"What are you reading?" she asked curiously. She wondered what was really Kathy's idea of happiness, what ambition, if any, she had in life. The girl held the book toward her.

"It's called 'Lover or Friend,'" she said cheerfully. "It's such a pretty tale; would you like to read it?"

"No, thank you."

Cecilie went back to her corner. Again Roger's deceit raced through her mind. It had been all lies? He had lied when he said he loved her, lied when he said that it mattered nothing to him what her people were, or how she earned her living, lied when he had said it would break his heart if she sent him away. She gripped her hands in the lap of her skirt, and set her teeth.

If only she could force herself to forget him; if only she could keep her thoughts from ever turning toward him again. But whichever way she looked, she saw his thin brown face and compelling eyes, heard his voice in the onward rush of the train, heard his deep laugh.

"I will not think of him. I will not!" she told herself desperately, but it was useless.

It seemed an eternity before they reached New York. When at last the train slowed down Cecilie got up with a long breath of relief. Kathy had put the book away, donned her cotton gloves, and hauled down her many packages. The familiar sounds of the metropolis were all about them, the opening of doors, the voices of the porters, the grind of taxicabs.

"I don't know how we're going to manage all these parcels," said Kathy distractedly.

"We'll have a taxi," Cecilie answered while Kathy looked on in dismay.

"It will cost about two dollars," she said. "We could have checked your big box here and gone on the subway."

Cecilie did not answer; she felt impatient even with Kathy—Kathy, who never failed her.

From the cab the two girls looked out of the window at the gathering twilight. "It's rather nice to be back home after all, isn't it?" she asked. "I wonder if Mrs. Wrigley's baby has cut any more teeth."

She talked away platitudinously till they reached Brooklyn and the uninteresting street where they lived.

Suddenly Kathy cried out, "Oh, there's Mrs. Wrigley at the door with the baby in her arms. She got your wire all right, then!"

Cecilie did not answer. There was a dreadful sense of finality in her heart. She felt like an escaped prisoner, who,

after a few days' glorious liberty, is dragged relentlessly back to prison. Kathy scrambled out of the cab, laden with her parcels. She ran up the steps and kissed the baby, and shook hands with smiling Mrs. Wrigley.

"You look well, I must say," the woman observed. "You look a sight better than Miss Vanstone does, anyway."

"I'm tired," said Cecilie hurriedly. "It was so hot in the train. Have you got any tea for us, Mrs. Wrigley?"

"Yes indeed," the landlady answered cordially.

After the good woman had done everything she could to make them comfortable she went away and closed the door after her.

Kathy began to undo her parcels.

"It *is* nice to be home," she said again in her cheery way. "The room looks smaller, though, somehow, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Cecilie. She felt as if the walls were closing in upon her. She thought despairingly of the big rooms from which they had just come, with wide windows open to the sea. She turned from the closet where she had been hanging her coat. "Give me some tea, Kathy, or I shall die."

Kathy left her brown paper bundles immediately and busied herself with the teapot.

"There's nothing like tea when you're tired," she said prosaically. "Have a piece of cake, it's——" She broke off as Mrs. Wrigley opened the door again.

"I forgot to tell you," she said apologetically, "that a gentleman called here this morning. He wouldn't leave no name, but he wanted to see Miss Vanstone very pertick'ler, he said. I told him you was both away, and not coming back till Saturday, so he said as he'd call Saturday night or Monday. Then your wire come, just as he was going, so I ran after him and told him that you'd be home this evening. He looked very pleased, and said as he'd call tonight, about eight."

"I wonder who he is?" said Kathy mildly amazed. "Who do you think he can be, Cecilie?"

"Somebody begging, I should think, if he wouldn't leave a name. Did he look as if he was begging, Mrs. Wrigley?"

Mrs. Wrigley bridled.

"That he didn't!" she protested warmly. "He was a gentleman; he came in a limousine."

"Heavens!" said Cecilie cynically. "It couldn't have been the president, could it?" she asked, with a weary attempt at levity.

Mrs. Wrigley laughed.

"What a one you are for a joke, Miss Vanstone!" she said. She went down the stairs still laughing.

Kathy cut a large slice of cake.

"I wonder who it was," she mused. "It seems funny. We don't know any men, do we?'"

"Not men who drive around in limousines," Cecilie answered in a tired voice. She got up from the table and walked over to the window, where she stood looking out on the narrow street and the row of houses where each one looked alike.

For a moment she closed her eyes, and thought of the Jersey shore, and the wide stretch of blue sea. For a moment, in imagination, she walked the golden sands with Buchanan, heard his voice, and met the worshiping gaze of his eyes. *That* had been her glimpse of Paradise.

Again she stared blankly at the narrow street and the line of houses that all looked alike, and she heard Kathy's kindly, droning platitudes instead of Buchanan's deep voice. "Such a nice cake," Kathy was saying contentedly. "I wonder if Mrs. Wrigley made it or bought it."

Cecilie swung round; she felt as if something had snapped in her brain.

She put up her hands blindly to her eyes, and before Kathy could move or reach her, she fell senseless to the floor.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

Kathy sat at the wide-open window of Mrs. Wrigley's best room, and looked out into the warm darkness with troubled eyes.

A shaded lamp burned on the table behind her; yellow lights from the windows of the houses opposite pierced the darkness like venomous eyes. Away in the distance came the roar of the L.

Kathy leaned a little forward, and peered at the small face of the gun-metal watch on her wrist. It was nearly nine o'clock.

For three hours Cecilie had lain in a sort of heavy stupor which was neither sleep nor unconsciousness.

Between them, Kathy and Mrs. Wrigley had put her to bed behind the long curtain which screened the bed from the rest of the room.

"She does look bad, poor dear," said the landlady with deep concern. "It's a touch of the sun, maybe."

"Perhaps it is," agreed Kathy, as she bathed her friend's hot forehead and white face. "I wonder if I ought to have a doctor?"

Mrs. Wrigley did not think it necessary.

"He'll charge you five dollars," she said, "and do no more for her than you or me. Wait till the morning and see how she is then, poor dear."

That was three hours ago, and Cecilie still lay with closed eyes.

Once Kathy left her seat by the window and tiptoed across to the bed.

"Cecilie," she whispered anxiously.

The girl opened her eyes.

"Oh, leave me alone. Do please leave me alone," she said piteously.

Kathy went back to the window; in her heart she knew that this was no case for the doctor, that there was only one man who could cure the heart-break with which Cecilie was wrestling. She could almost hate Buchanan as she sat there, afraid of the heavy silence behind her, looking out over Brooklyn. Supposing Cecilie were to die? There was real terror in the thought.

For four years the two girls had been like sisters; for four years they had shared the room at Mrs. Wrigley's, and put up with the long hours and rebuffs at the second-class department store. Kathy had been selling tapes and buttons at Brixton's six months before Cecilie came, and the two girls had been friends from the first day of their meeting. Perhaps it was the very difference in their natures that had drawn them together; perhaps it was the loneliness of them both.

Kathy was an orphan; she could remember her parents, and wished only to forget them. They had never cared for her. She had never been wanted. Beyond that, there was nothing romantic in her life; she knew quite well that there never would be.

Some people are made like that; from the day they are born, a pathway stretches before them, unbroken by great emotions or happenings till it leads them to the grave.

But it was different with Cecilie. Even Kathy's undiscerning eyes saw that she was different from the rest of the girls who were content to handle tapes and buttons and ask nothing more.

"I don't know how you can stay here," Kathy said to her one day in a moment of inspiration. "You were meant for something better."

Cecilie laughed.

"I'm just waiting for that something to come along," she said. "I'm a fatalist, if you know what that is, my dear. I believe that if anything is going to happen to any one it will, no matter what you do to prevent it, or how you

try to hurry it on. My mother was like that, too; she——" Cecilie stopped. "Am I boring you?" she asked.

Kathy was deeply interested, and said so. She had been wanting to ask about Cecilie's people, but had not liked to do so.

"I should love to hear about your mother," she said.

"She's dead," Cecilie answered abruptly. "She died a year ago, just before I came to Brixton's and met you. I wanted to go on the stage, but I hadn't the money to wait till I could get something, so I just came along here. But I don't mean to stay. Some day——" She broke off with a shrug. "What's the use of building castles in the air?" she asked scornfully.

"I should think it's a lot of use for any one as pretty as you," said Kathy simply. "Haven't you a father or any brothers or sisters?"

"No. I suppose I *had* a father, in fact, I *know* I had. But my mother never spoke about him; he left her when I was quite a child. I dare say he's dead. But I don't know or care. He must have been a brute, anyway."

Sitting at the window in the summer night, Kathy's thoughts went back across the four years of her friendship with Cecilie. It seemed impossible now that she had ever managed to get along without her; it seemed more impossible still to imagine a future without her. Kathy rose to her feet and took herself determinedly to task.

It was nonsense to think that Cecilie might die. People did not die of broken hearts, except in novels. Cecilie would get over her disappointment in time, and life would go on just as it had done before their fateful vacation.

Life would go on just as it had done. Ah, but that was what Cecilie had so dreaded. The dreary routine of life, getting up at the same hour, summer and winter, catching the subway, selling an unvaried monotony of tapes and buttons, and buttons and tapes; coming back to Mrs. Wrigley's boarding house for a supper, and going to bed.

For the first time, standing there in the hot silent room, with its faint, sickly scent of eau de Cologne, with which Mrs. Wrigley had insisted on bathing Cecilie's head, Kathy realized dimly something of what this life must mean to the younger girl.

With her beauty and high spirits, she had been born for something greater and wider than this narrow existence. Down at Spring Lake, despite her inadequate clothes, Cecilie had seemed in her right sphere. She had been at her best with Buchanan. She had never looked or felt awkward in his company as she—Kathy—was painfully conscious of having done. She had been just the wife for him, just the woman to grace his table and uphold his name. And yet it had all ended so soon in disaster!

"Poor, poor Cecilie," said Kathy in her heart, and the tears rushed to her eyes as she remembered her friend's happy face during those last few short days.

"They were made for each other," she told herself. "Just made for each other! I can't understand it; I can't, I can't."

A bell sounded through the house. Kathy moved hastily to the bed; she hoped the noise would not disturb her friend, but Cecilie had turned on her side, her cheek resting on her hand, long lashes down-pointed in sleep.

There was a faint tinge of color now in her white face. Her lips were a little parted in a smile.

If she was dreaming, they were happy dreams, thought Kathy thankfully as she went softly away and opened the door.

Mrs. Wrigley was just coming up the stairs. She spoke to Kathy in a stage whisper.

"The gentleman's come!"

"What gentleman?" asked Kathy

blankly; then all at once she remembered.

"Oh, but Cecilie is asleep," she said hurriedly. "He can't see her. Tell him to leave a message."

"I told him, but he said he'd see you."

"Me?"

Kathy looked dismayed; she hated strangers. She never knew what to say to them. Mrs. Wrigley read refusal in her face. She whispered another appeal.

"Just come down a minute and speak to him. He seems very nice."

"Oh, very well," said Kathy reluctantly.

She followed Mrs. Wrigley slowly downstairs. The door of the parlor stood open. The "gentleman," whoever he was, must have heard every word of the whispered colloquy.

Kathy went into the room nervously and stood for a moment with her hand on the door, as if ready for flight.

Mrs. Wrigley had lit her best lamp in honor of the visitor, and drawn the blinds against inquisitive neighbors.

The room smelled stuffy and unused, in spite of its spotless cleanliness. There was an odor of newly washed curtains and strong yellow soap.

At sight of Kathy a man rose from a chair by the table. He stood well within the yellow circle of lamplight.

He was rather a tall man, and Kathy's first impression was that he was a "swell," as she afterward eloquently expressed it to Cecilie. He wore a light overcoat over evening clothes, and there was an undoubted diamond in his shirt front.

"You are Miss Vanstone's friend, are you not?" he asked. His voice was pleasant, the voice of a gentleman.

Kathy nodded.

"Yes," she said. She went a step farther into the room, relinquishing her hold of the door. "You can't see her," she added, with a spurt of bravery. "She's not well. If you would like to leave a message, I'll tell her in the morning."

The man smiled. Kathy's bluntness amused him.

"I'm sorry she's not well," he said. "And I'm sorry I'm later than I said I would be. I told your landlady that I would be here at eight; it's past nine now, I see. My motor broke down on the bridge, and we had to wait."

Kathy gasped. Her mystification increased. What in the world could he want with Cecilie?

"If you think I could see Miss Vanstone in the morning," the stranger went on, "I will call, then. If not——" He paused. "Perhaps you will ask her to let me know when I may see her." He laid a card on the table.

Kathy took up the card, and looked at it curiously. It was engraved; not at all like the cheap cards which Brixton's produced for a dollar and a half at Christmas time. She read the name on it carefully. Then she gave a gasp.

Templeton Vanstone.

And underneath, written in pencil, was the name of a fashionable New York hotel.

The card fell from Kathy's nerveless fingers.

"Who—who are you?" she asked breathlessly. "You've got the same name as Cecilie."

The man laughed. "Well," he said humorously, "that's not greatly to be wondered at, is it? You see, I happen to be her father."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

Kathy finished arranging a great bunch of roses in Mrs. Wrigley's best china bowl—fetched from the front sitting room downstairs for the occasion—and carried them over to a small table beside Cecilie's bed.

"I think you ought to show a little more interest in your father," Kathy insisted.

"There!" she said triumphantly. "Doesn't the sight of them make you want to get up and take an interest in life again? My word, Cecilie, if ever there was a lucky girl in this world——"

She broke off as she saw the expression of her friend's face. She stopped hurriedly and kissed her.

"I'm sorry, dear," she said remorsefully. "You know what I meant—that it's all just like a fairy tale, your father turning up after all these years, with heaps of money and an automobile, and everything you can want. I thought I must be dreaming that night we came back from Spring Lake, when I went downstairs to see him. And do you know that it's nearly two weeks ago?" Kathy smiled brightly.

"It seems longer to me," said Cecilie.

She looked very pale and listless. There was a sort of lackluster in her eyes, as if she had journeyed all round the world and found nothing to hold or interest her.

She had not been ill in the generally accepted sense of the word; the doctors called it a nervous breakdown. They said that perfect rest and quiet were the only cure; so they had allowed her to lie and sleep away the golden summer days, only rousing her for food.

"I think you ought to show a little more interest in him," Kathy pursued. "He's been so awfully, awfully kind," she went on. "Ever since you've been ill he's called every day; and look at the things he's sent. I *do* think you might see him, just for a moment."

"I don't want to see him," said Cecilie petulantly. "I can't get up any enthusiasm over a man who deserted his wife, and allowed her to think he was dead for more than twenty years. I suppose he is my father, if what he says is true, but I'm quite prepared to hate him all the same."

"He's not at all the sort of man you could hate," said Kathy quickly. "And"—she hesitated, looking doubtfully at Cecilie—"can't you see that this is just the chance you've always longed for?" she asked wistfully. "Can't you see that he's more than willing to take you about with him, and tell everybody who you are, and spend his money on you, and give you the sort of life you've craved to have? Don't you remember that afternoon at Spring Lake, when you——" She broke off, shocked at her own blundering mistake. Tears

rushed to her eyes. "Oh, I'm so sorry, dear," she cried. "I'm so silly! I always seem to be hurting you, when I would rather *die* really."

"It doesn't matter," said Cecilie. She smiled faintly, and put out her hand. "I shall have to get used to it, so I may as well start now." A splash of color suddenly dyed her cheeks. "Do you know, Kathy," she said in a low, shaken voice, "if it wasn't for one thing—just one thing—I'd refuse to have anything to do with my father, if he is *really* my father. I'd let him see that I wasn't going to accept anything from him after the way he treated my mother. But I've been thinking it over while I've been lying here." She sat up, leaning on her elbow, a sudden light sparkled in her eyes. "Do you know what I mean?" she asked.

Kathy shook her head.

"No; unless it's because he is rich and——"

Cecilie laughed contemptuously.

"Do you think I care for his money? No, it's not that. But if, as he says, he can take me about among well-to-do people, if he can take me into society, don't you see that I might meet—might meet—oh, you know whom I mean." She could not force herself to speak Buchanan's name.

Kathy gave a little eager cry.

"Oh, Cecilie, you mean that perhaps it might come right, after all; that there might be come explanation, that you'd forgive him, and——" She broke off, almost shocked at the fierce bitterness of her friend's face. "Oh, what *do* you mean?" she asked in a troubled voice.

"I mean," said Cecilie relentlessly, "that I might be able to pay him back for what he has done to me, if I met him on his own ground. If I were well dressed, if I had money, if I were *some one!*" She laughed shrilly. "Instead of just a shopgirl! Oh, how shocked you look! Poor old Kathy. You can't understand, and I can't explain, but since we came home——" She broke off, staring before her with brooding eyes, as if she were looking back over the past few weeks that had been like some horrible nightmare. "I think I've grown to hate him more than I ever loved him," she added slowly.

Kathy made no answer; such depths were beyond her. She believed in forgiving her enemies. But, then, she had never had one that really mattered.

"I don't think I could ever hate any one if I had once loved him," she said presently in a puzzled voice. She had read the sentiment somewhere in a book, and applauded it in her own mind. Cecilie made a little impatient gesture; it was no use trying to make Kathy understand. She gave it up.

But she began to mend from that day.

Revenge is not a worthy object, but it dragged her back from the listlessness and hopeless inertia into which she had fallen. When Templeton Vanstone called the next day, Kathy told him that Cecilie would see him.

"She's up and dressed," she said delightedly. "But she's very weak still, so you mustn't excite her."

Vanstone smiled at Kathy's grave face.

"Very good, nurse," he said humorously.

Kathy flushed. She stood aside and let him go up the stairs alone.

Vanstone paused outside the closed door for a moment before he knocked. He was conscious of an almost absurd nervousness. He was going to see his daughter!

The last time he had seen her she had sat up in a high chair, with a bib round her neck, regarding him with solemn eyes.

He had walked out of the room then in a rage, and out of the life of the woman whom he had left sobbing in broken-hearted abandon. Vanstone was not proud of the memory.

As he stood outside Cecilie's door he seemed to see in swift panorama before his eyes the past twenty years; and he was forced to admit that there was very little in them of which he could honestly be proud. His whole life had been selfish, pleasure seeking.

He had married Cecilie's mother because she was pretty and because he wanted her. He had left her because he had grown tired of her, and because he wanted to be free. For twenty years he had buried himself on the other side of the world. And it was only when a lucky deal made him a wealthy man that he thought once again of the woman he had married, and the child who had watched him walk out of both their lives with such solemn eyes.

So he had come home! And weeks of search had only led him to his wife's grave in a dreary corner of a big cemetery up in Westchester.

Who knows what feelings of remorse and grief filled his selfish heart as he stood there and looked down at the narrow bed, where his wife lay sleeping? Perhaps such men cannot feel remorse, but the simple stone cross with her name and age carved on it, seemed like a silent reproach to him.

Cecilie, wife of Templeton Vanstone, aged forty-five years.

Cecilie—the little name that had once been the sweetest music in the world to him. What a pretty woman she had been! He wondered if she had changed much before her death.

They had called the child Cecilie, too. With something of a shock, he realized that his daughter must be past twenty. What had become of her? What was she like? Some forgotten memory of the careless affection he had felt for the solemn-eyed child in her high chair stirred again in his heart. He would find her; he would make up to her with his wealth for his neglect of her mother.

It had been easy enough to find Cecilie. And yet, now he stood with only the door between him and the daughter he had deserted; shame kept Templeton Vanstone hesitating there.

What would she say to him? What did she know of his parting with her mother?

There was a slight movement from within; the handle was turned, and Cecilie herself stood in the doorway.

For a moment they looked at each other silently. There was defiance in Cecilie's eyes; abasement in the man's. Then he held out his hand.

"Cecilie!"

She was so like her mother as she stood there, so like, that for the moment Vanstone forgot all that had passed, and was back again in his youth with the woman he had loved and deserted.

Cecilie opened the door a little wider.

"Please come in," she said faintly.

She was trembling a little; she had made up her mind to hate this man. It was humiliating to find all her animosity and resentment dying even as she looked at him.

He followed her into the room, and closed the door. The air was heavy with the perfume of the roses he had sent her. Through the open window the song of a caged canary pierced the silence.

Cecilie stood with her hand on a chair back. She hated herself for the sudden weakness that shook her body. With a desperate effort she forced herself to meet her father's eyes.

She had meant to tell him that she had no use for a man who could brutally desert wife and child. She wanted him to see that there was no affection in her heart for him. But all at once she found herself crying childishly, miserably, big tears running down her face.

"Cecilie, Cecilie," said the man again.

He put his arms round her and gently pressed her head back to his

shoulder. "My poor little girl," he said. "My poor little girl."

Kathy spent her afternoon in the kitchen with Mrs. Wrigley.

Once she climbed the stairs and listened apprehensively at the door.

"Cecilie's crying," she informed the landlady in an awe-stricken voice, going back to the kitchen again.

"And no wonder, poor dear," said Mrs. Wrigley warmly. "It's enough to make her cry. But she'll be happy enough with him—with all his money and motors and all. It's *you* I can't help fretting about, my dear."

Kathy swallowed hard. For the past two weeks she had been trying not to think, trying to forget what an upheaval this would mean in her life.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

She picked up Mrs. Wrigley's fat baby from the rug, and held it tightly in her arms as if for comfort.

"Why, without Miss Vanstone," pursued the baby's mother. "It's a long time, four years to live with a person, and then suddenly to lose them, as you might say."

Kathy laughed, not very mirthfully.

"You talk as if she were going to die," she said. "And I'm sure to see a lot of her. Cecilie isn't the sort to turn her back on an old friend because she's suddenly got rich." She stopped. "He's coming downstairs," she whispered excitedly. "You go and see him out, Mrs. Wrigley. I can't!"

The good woman departed. She had had more than one generous tip from her "swell" visitor, and was nothing loath to put herself in the way of another.

"He's gone," she announced, returning after a few moments. "He drove off in that beautiful automobile."

Kathy kissed the fat baby, and put him back on the rug. Then she went slowly upstairs.

Cecilie was looking out of the window, holding the lace curtain aside to watch the big car down the narrow street. There was a flush on her face as she turned at sound of the newcomer's step.

"Well?" said Kathy uncompromisingly.

Cecilie put an arm round her shoulders. "He's going to take me away next week," she said.

"Oh!" said Kathy blankly. There was a moment's silence, then suddenly she burst out crying.

"It isn't that I'm not glad—for your sake," she sobbed. "But what shall I do without you? I simply couldn't stay on here alone where we've always been together. And the store will be impossible without you."

Cecilie shivered. It seemed queer that she was never going back to sell tape and linen buttons; it seemed too good to be true. She wondered if she would wake from this dream as she had wakened from that other, if this man who had painted such a golden future for her was lying even as that other had done.

"Listen, dear," she said; she kept her arm round Kathy's heaving shoulders. "Oh, don't cry. There's nothing to cry for! Surely you didn't think I was going to walk away and leave you here to go on drudging day after day, as you have done? I've told—father"—she hesitated a little over the unaccustomed word—"all about you, and that whatever happens you will always be my best friend. And he said that of course you were to come with us."

Kathy drew back very decidedly.

"It's very sweet of you," she said, mopping her eyes. "But I could not ever think of such a thing. I must earn my own living. I could never be happy any other way."

It was surprising how decided she was about it. No argument or pleading could move her.

"I love you more than any one in

the world," she sobbed forlornly. "But I could never give up my independence —even for you."

She held to her resolution through the last week that they were together. She packed Cecilie's few belongings for her, helped her buy new clothes with the money her father gave her. She went through the whole sad leave-taking with iron fortitude; even stood at the door with Mrs. Wrigley and the fat baby to wave good-by. And not a tear escaped her till the big car that bore Cecilie away to her new life had turned the corner. Then she ran indoors and upstairs, and flung herself on her bed.

Mrs. Wrigley followed with all speed, the fat baby tucked under her arm.

"Don't take on so, my dear," she pleaded, tears in her own eyes. "She won't forget you, bless her, and to my mind she'll find no better friend among the grand folk she's gone to than what you've been to her—no, nor half so good, neither!"

She plumped the dimpled infant down on the bed and put a kindly arm round Kathy's sobbing figure.

The baby sat stolidly, sucking a finger for a moment; then he crawled along the counterpane and laid his chubby face to Kathy's wet cheek.

"Did you ever?" demanded his mother delightedly. "He knows all about it, that he does! Bless his heart."

Kathy sat up and took the little fellow in her arms. There is something wonderfully comforting in the love of a small child. The mother stole softly away.

"He'll comfort her better than what I can," she told herself with sudden wisdom, as she went downstairs to prepare her husband's dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW LIFE FOR CECILIE.

Cecilie never forgot that first evening of her new life.

Her father had taken her to the hotel where he had been staying since his return to New York.

"We can have an apartment or a

The baby crawled along the counterpane and laid his chubby face to Kathy's wet cheek.

house later on, if you care about it," he told her. "But for the present I thought you would prefer to stay in the hotel. The guests will amuse you. There are always fresh people coming and going." He looked at her almost wistfully; he was very anxious to please her and make her happy.

"Whichever *you* like best will please me," Cecilie told him. She felt a little strange and lonely. She longed for Kathy, and the quiet homeliness of their room. There was a lump in her throat as the smart bell hop who had escorted her upstairs retreated, closing the door softly.

She stood looking round the big apartment with a feeling of desolation. It was all very grand and imposing; much more so than even the hotel at Spring Lake. She wondered why she did not feel happier; this was what she had always longed for—and yet—— There was a lump in her throat and tears in her eyes as she thought of Kathy, and Mrs. Wrigley, and the fat baby.

She took off her hat and coat and sat down on the side of the bed. A long mirror in the door opposite reflected her grave face and slim figure in its new, handsome clothes.

What a long cry back it seemed to that day when she and Kathy had gone down to Spring Lake. How much had happened since, and yet it was barely a month of time in all.

She thought of Buchanan, and her face hardened. It no longer hurt her to remember him; her heart felt like a stone in her breast.

With deliberation she conjured his face to her memory; feature by feature she traced it in imagination—the gray eyes, and thick brown hair that waved a little where it parted, the clean-shaven mouth that could smile so irresistibly. Again she saw the tall, lithe figure, with its slightly stooping shoulders.

What was he doing now, she wondered dully. How had he passed the long days since that last morning when he and she had walked the beach together?

Did he ever think of her? Did he ever remember—— She rose to her feet, catching her breath sharply.

After all, it had not quite gone, the sting and the bitter pain. She moved across to the dressing table and mechanically began to change her dress for dinner.

It seemed odd to be dressing for dinner again. She thought of the shabby black frock over which she had spilled the soup, and a wry smile twisted her lips.

What would Mrs. Philip Buchanan say if she could see her now? It brought a hard gleam of satisfaction to the girl's chill heart to know that in future she would be able to dress as well and expensively as this woman who had so hated and snubbed her.

Presently, when her toilet was finished, she turned on all the lights in the room and stared at herself anxiously in the long mirror.

She was wearing one of her new frocks. It was made of soft white satin, veiled with filmy black. At her waist was pinned a corsage of violets which held a single pink rose. Her father had thought the gift would please her.

What would Buchanan think of her if he could see her now? Would he have treated her any differently if down at Spring Lake he had known her to be what she was now, the only daughter of a wealthy man, who was willing and able to gratify her every wish?

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept through her. For a moment she hid her face in her hands, trying to still the bitter cry of her heart.

"I would give it all—all if only he loved me, if only he would take me in his arms again!"

But there was no trace of emotion

in her face when presently she joined her father downstairs.

Vanstone was a handsome man, and he looked his best in evening dress. A little thrill of pride went through Cecilie's heart as she looked at him.

"Are you pleased to be here, Cecilie?" he asked.

She nodded, and her fingers tightened on his arm.

More than one man, as she passed down the long room, looked admiringly at her; more than one woman scrutinized her pretty face with a shade of envy on her own.

Vanstone was proud of his daughter; possibly had she been a plain, awkward girl, he would have contented himself by making her a generous allowance, and letting her go her own way; but he loved beauty above everything. It reflected credit on himself that this dainty girl was his own daughter. Already he began to think of the day when she would make a good match.

He knew nothing about Roger Buchanan. Cecilie had made Kathy promise never to speak of it to a living soul.

Cecilie thought of Kathy now as she sat there in the brilliantly lit room, Kathy who was probably having a bread-and-cheese supper by lamplight, Kathy in her plain, ill-made frock.

Something seemed to seize her by the throat. How selfish of her to enjoy herself so, when Kathy—— Tears swam in her eyes. Dear, patient, unselfish Kathy!

Vanstone saw the sudden shadow on her bright face.

"What is it, Cecilie?" he asked.

She told him as best she could. She said that she could not bear to think of her friend's loneliness.

"We must talk it over, and see what can be done," he said kindly. "I should have been glad for her to have come with you."

"I know; but she wouldn't. She's so independent. Dear old Kathy! Nobody ever had a better friend than she's been to me."

"We must see what can be done," said her father again.

Cecilie looked round at the crowded room. Perhaps some day she would see again the face of the man who had taught her the meaning of love, and left her to learn its bitterness. Perhaps, somewhere, some day she would meet the steady gaze of his gray eyes, or hear his laugh, or—— Her hands clutched each other convulsively in the lap of her frock. She felt as if every drop of blood in her body were suddenly frozen. She knew that her face had gone marble white, for there, coming toward her, treading his way down the long room between the crowd of little tables, was Roger Buchanan.

CHAPTER XIV.

FACE TO FACE AGAIN.

Buchanan came down the long room listlessly, as if he had just drifted there without any definite aim or object. He was in evening dress. An attentive waiter, who evidently knew him, hurried forward to place him at a table.

After the first shock of seeing him, Cecilie recovered her self-posession. She leaned across the table and began talking and laughing with her father. She did not glance again in Buchanan's direction, but she knew that he had taken his seat at a small table a little to the right of hers, that he was sitting facing her. In another moment he must see her. She plunged recklessly into conversation; she was hardly conscious of what she was saying. She only felt that if she was silent for one moment she must faint, or scream, or do something desperate.

Vanstone readily fell in with her mood. Cecilie had hitherto been very stand-offish with him. There were a thousand things he wanted to know about her life, and about her mother's

death. He threw the ball of conversation back spiritedly; he little guessed what underlying tragedy was responsible for the feverish excitement in his daughter's face.

Buchanan sat looking before him listlessly; there was a sort of detached, loneliness about him that was somehow pathetic in the midst of all the laughter and gayety. Then suddenly, as the orchestra stopped, and there was a momentary lull in the chatter around him, he heard Cecilie laugh.

Only the ghost of the merry, wholehearted laughter he remembered as hers, and yet the sound of it almost stilled his heart, as he sat there, afraid to move or look up.

He knew it was not she, knew it *could* not be she. How many times had he tortured himself with the picture of her back again in the drab, monotonous life which she had said she so loathed, growing to hate him and his memory, turning for distraction to some other man.

The music started again; the buzz of conversation and laughter rushed on. Then Buchanan lifted his eyes slowly and looked across at the table where sat the woman whose laugh had reminded him so acutely of Cecilie's—*and it was Cecilie!*

Buchanan sat like a man turned to stone. For a moment he was not conscious of emotion of any sort.

Cecilie! This woman radiant and laughing, beautifully dressed and queenly, dining at one of the smartest hotels with a man who—— With an effort Buchanan tore his eyes from her face and looked at her companion.

A man in the prime of life; a handsome man still, despite his fast graying hair; a man who, even as Buchanan looked at him, looked deep into the eyes of the woman across the table.

Buchanan sat a little forward, staring at her with burning eyes. She was leaning back in her chair now, and the man opposite was pouring her a cup of coffee. As he pushed it across to her his hand touched hers and for a moment rested there lightly.

Buchanan never knew how he kept himself from springing to his feet. He ground his teeth to keep back the smothered cry that rushed to his lips, and, as if conscious of his agony, Cecilie turned her dainty head and looked full at him.

There was no trace of recognition in her beautiful eyes. Her lips smiled serenely, as after a moment's careless scrutiny of his face she turned away.

"Soup, sir?" said the waiter at Buchanan's elbow.

He moved a little to allow the man to attend to him; his mind was in a whirl. It *was* Cecilie! There was no longer the smallest doubt in his mind that it was she. A train of horrible suspicion turned him sick.

A month ago she had been a drudge in a second-class department store; now she looked as if she had been used to fashionable hotels and beautiful frocks all her life!

Who was this man with her?

To look at Roger as he sat there, a well-groomed, rather bored-looking man, nobody would have guessed the torment that was consuming him, the throbbing of every nerve in his body.

He had imagined that some day they must meet again; he had never dreamed it would be so soon as this, and in such circumstances. He had shed tears of blood during the past few weeks thinking of her, and apparently she had not needed his pity.

He had never seen her look so radiantly beautiful. Surely he had forgotten the sweet curves of her face, the masses of soft hair that crowned her little head, the whole daintiness of her.

He struggled through a pretense of dinner. Try as he would to keep his eyes from Cecilie's face, he found himself looking at her again and again.

Unhappy as he had been since they parted, it had been nothing to what he suffered now, as he sat there and saw her laughing and talking with another man.

And she had given him the cut direct. Evidently he had done his work only too well on the wind-swept beach that last morning; he had made her believe that he was the cur and cad he had wished her to believe him. His very being revolted now at the memory of what had been then only an honest desire to spare her.

Why had he not told her the truth instead of shattering her faith in him? He had been a fool—a fool!

Cecilie had risen from her seat. The man took her silken cloak from the waiter and himself wrapped it carefully about her.

"'I have tickets for the 'Follies,'" Buchanan heard him say. "Do you care to go, or are you too tired?"

"Tired!" echoed Cecilie. She raised dancing eyes to the man's face as he folded the cape about her. "I should just love to go."

Buchanan's thoughts raced back to the first night he had spoken to her out on the dark sands, when he had suggested a ride in his car. He remembered the eager, childish way she had accepted. He could hear now her breathless, excited voice as she had told him that she had never been in a car in all her life before. He sat there in helpless misery, cursing himself and her, and most of all the woman who had brought his castle in ruins about him.

And in another moment Cecilie would have walked out of his life once again. The soft satin of her gown brushed his arm as she passed him on her way out of the long room. The perfume of the flowers she wore reminded him relentlessly of the night he had given her just such a rose to wear in her black frock. He had kissed it before he gave it to her. Afterward she had told him that she would always keep it.

Buchanan rose to his feet and called for his check. He felt he should go mad if he sat there any longer. As he got into his coat he saw something white lying at his feet. It was a woman's glove—Cecilie's glove.

He tossed the waiter five dollars and told him to keep the change. He caught up the little glove and made his way out of the room, pushing impatiently through the maze of tables. If he were quick he would be able to see her again, to speak to her, to hear her speak to him.

When he reached the lounge Cecilie and her escort were at the door. Buchanan went up to them. "Pardon me, I think you dropped this."

Cecilie turned slowly. There was a set smile on her lips.

"Oh, thank you." She looked at her father. "Please take it for me, will you?"

The glove changed hands. Vanstone thanked Buchanan and turned away. Outside at the curb stood a private motor, big headlights flaring through the summer night.

Buchanan stood looking after them as Cecilie and the man entered. The doors were slammed by an attentive starter, and the car glided away. Buchanan went up to the man who was smilingly pocketing a generous tip.

"Do you know who that—that lady and gentleman are?" he asked with dry lips.

The man shook his head.

"They only came to-day, sir," he answered.

"You mean they are staying here?"

"Yes, sir. The gentleman has a suite of rooms here."

Buchanan's face was ghastly as he turned away, and strode out into the warm night. He walked on and on till he found himself striding across Sev-

enty-second Street to Riverside Drive. Seating himself near the bank the soft lap, lap of the river seemed to soothe him, and the roar of New York filled the night. Myriads of lights twinkled across the water; a starry sky smiled down with placid approval on the great city.

But Buchanan's tortured imagination saw nothing but the luxurious interior of the car that had just carried away the woman he loved, and the pleased, devoted face of the man who escorted her.

Buchanan had arranged to meet his brother at nine o'clock, but he forgot all about the appointment. After having waited an hour for him, Philip began to get anxious and went off to his club to see if Roger had been there. He found him in the smoking room and took him home.

Louise Buchanan, returning late from the theater, met her husband coming downstairs. He looked very worried.

"What do you think?" she began excitedly, then stopped. "Is anything the matter?" she asked. "Where's Roger?"

"I've just put him to bed. I found him at the club, dead drunk."

Louise drew her white shoulders together in a shrug. "He's a fool!" she said sharply. "He'll kill himself if he goes on like that. Doctor Martyn told him——"

"Oh, I know, but I don't think he cares much if he pegs out or not," Philip interrupted gloomily.

His wife drew off her long gloves and tapped a pointed toe on the polished floor.

"Whom do you think I saw at the Royale Theater to-night?" she asked suddenly.

Philip shook his head.

"Bella Clair?" he asked disinterestedly.

"Stupid!" said his wife. "No—it was that Miss Vanstone."

Philip's mouth dropped.

"Did she see you?" he asked blankly.

"Yes, I am sure she did. I was with the Selbys in a box."

"And she was in the gallery, I suppose?"

"No, she was not," said his wife flatly. "She was in a box, too, with a very smart-looking man. Goodness knows where she's picked him up! I couldn't believe my eyes at first. She was so well dressed. She's soon consoled herself for Roger anyway." She laughed with a sort of chagrin; it had pleased her to think of Cecilie as disappointed and unhappy.

"I always knew she wasn't any good," she finished spitefully. "A nice thing it would have been for us all if Roger had married her."

Philip made no answer. It was not always that he had the courage to disagree with his wife.

CHAPTER XV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Vanstone was as good as his word with regard to Kathy. When he heard that it had always been the dream of Kathy's life to take up painting, he said that the thing was as good as done.

Cecilie rushed off to Mrs. Wrigley's. She knew what time Kathy came home from the store. Then she and Mrs. Wrigley planned a surprise for her. When Kathy climbed the stairs, tired and dispirited, she found Cecilie waiting for her.

The two girls hugged each other. It was only two days since they had parted, but to one of them at least it had seemed a lifetime.

Kathy laughed and cried together when she heard her friend's news.

"It's too good to be true," she said again and again. "To think I can really take up my art at last. I've just longed for it all my life! Oh, Cecilie, you are a darling!"

Cecilie was very much touched by her friend's gratitude. After all, it was such a little to do. She thought with a sense of guilt of all the money and luxury her father had lavished on her during the past two days.

"It isn't anything," she protested. "I only wish you'd let me do more for you. If only you'd come and live with us."

"I shouldn't like it any better than *you* would," said Kathy in her downright way. "You've only got to look at me to know that I'm not fit for society. I should be scared to death of all the people I should have to meet, and I should look a sight in smart clothes. Cecilie, do you know how lovely you look, I wonder?"

She gazed at her friend with honest admiration.

"Father's so extravagant," said Cecilie. "I'm afraid to say that I like anything, because he goes and buys it directly. He must be a very rich man, Kathy."

"He's a very kind man, too," said Kathy warmly. "Aren't you beginning to get a little fond of him, Cecilie?"

Cecilie hesitated.

"I suppose I shall," she said at length. "If only he hadn't been so cruel to mother——" She broke off. "It's no use thinking about that though now, is it? And I am sure he is trying to make up for it. Kathy, I saw Mrs. Buchanan at the theater last night!"

"Oh, Cecilie!"

"Father and I were in the opposite box to her. She did stare. Of course I didn't take any notice of her."

Kathy chuckled.

"She must have been wild. To see you looking so lovely and prosperous," she said delightedly.

Cecilie made no answer; she was wondering whether she would mention having seen Roger, but somehow she could not bring herself to speak of him.

She insisted on taking Kathy back to the hotel to dinner. Kathy did not want to go. She said she had no fit clothes to wear. She said that she would be hopelessly out of it, but Cecilie overruled all her objections.

"If you're going to keep away from me because I'm well off," she said with pretended anger, "I'll throw father over and come back here to live with you!"

Kathy gave in; she always gave in to Cecilie over small things. And after all, she thoroughly enjoyed herself. She told Mrs. Wrigley afterward, that she had never had such a glorious dinner. She said that every man in the room was looking at Cecilie; she described Vanstone himself as a "dear."

For the next few days Kathy lived in a whirl of excitement. She gave notice at the Brixton's, finished her week there, and shed a few tears when she turned her back on it forever. In her way she had been happy there because she had not expected much. As she told Cecilie afterward, it was a great risk starting life afresh. One never knew what might happen.

"You can't live in the same cabbage patch all your life," said Cecilie, laughing. "And you'll love work in the School of Design. You know it's what you've always longed for."

Cecilie was right. Before Kathy had been in her new surroundings three days, she wrote that she had never been so happy in all her life before.

Cecilie showed the letter to her father.

"What an enthusiast!" he said. "Well, it's a good thing we all haven't the same tastes. You look tired, Cecilie."

"Do I? It's all the late nights we've been having. I'm not used to so much gayety, you know."

She got up from the table; they had been breakfasting in their own rooms, and walked over to the window.

It was a golden September morning, with a mild breeze blowing, but New York was beginning to look limp and fagged after the hot summer.

In a way Cecilie was happy enough with her father. She liked the excitement and luxury of her new surroundings. But she was not really satisfied. She was always conscious of a vague, indefinable longing in her heart. A sort of groping through darkness for something which eternally evaded her.

She tried not to think of Buchanan; she wanted to be happy. Hers was not a nature content to give way to melancholy and heartbreak. She hated the misery she was still forced to suffer. She would have given anything had it been possible to wipe that disastrous vacation out of her life.

"How would you like a few days at the shore?" Mr. Vanstone asked.

He was watching her with anxious eyes. Cecilie had grown to mean a great deal to him during the short time they had lived together. He dreaded that she might weary of life with him and want to go her own way again. His idea of misery was a house in the country. That was why he had first begun to weary of Cecilie's mother; she had loved the solitude of an out of town place where she might live unnoticed. He had hated it.

The few times he had taken her to New York with him she had been nervous and wretched. The noise had always made her head ache. His friends had always dried up what little self-confidence she had possessed, poor soul.

Vanstone had thanked his lucky stars that Cecilie was not like her mother in this respect. He made his suggestion of the sea now more from a wish to please her than any desire of his own to leave the city.

"Shall we run down to Southampton for a week or so?" he pursued. "Or Newport? Perhaps you'd like Spring Lake?"

Cecilie turned sharply.

"I *hate* Spring Lake!" she said vigorously.

"Really? Your friend Kathy told me how much you both enjoyed your holiday there."

"Did she? Well, she was wrong. I loathe the place. I hope I shall never see it again." There was a little quiver in her voice which she tried in vain to steady.

"Well, then, we won't say any more about it," he told her readily. "I only want you to be happy and have a good time. Are you tired of the hotel? Would you like me to take an apartment or a house?"

Cecilie laughed.

"Oh, no, father! I'm quite happy. Please don't think I'm not. You're much too good to me as it is."

He rose and came to stand behind her; he put an arm round her waist.

"I've got only you in the world, you know," he said. "And I don't deserve that you should be so content to stay with me. It's too late for regrets, but if you only knew, Cecilie, how often and bitterly I have regretted what's past and gone—your poor mother——"

He broke off.

Tears swam suddenly in Cecilie's eyes.

"Men don't understand," she said gently. "They just don't understand what it means to a woman if they grow tired of her, or neglect her, or—— Oh, I can't explain what I mean. But sometimes love means everything—*just everything!*" There was a passionate ring in her voice, something fierce in the close fold of her lips.

Vanstone put a hand beneath her chin and turned her face so that he could look into her eyes.

"Why, Cecilie!" he said in dismay. "Who has taught you to feel like this? Why, my dear——"

Cecilie moved from his encircling arm.

She put her arm around his neck and kissed him for the first time.

"Now you're imagining all manner of wonderful things," she accused him with forced gayety. "But you're quite, quite wrong. There isn't a man in the whole world I would marry, even if he asked me on his bended knees."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Vanstone, though his eyes still looked a little anxious. "I don't want to see my daughter just as I've found her."

"It won't be so easy to do that," she threatened him, laughing now. Suddenly she asked, "What are we going to do to-day?"

"Anything you like. Shall we take a run out in the car somewhere?"

Cecilie agreed readily. She found the hot weather rather trying among bricks and mortar. It was the kind of day when one sighed for the ocean or open green fields.

"We'll take a run up Westchester way," said Vanstone suddenly. "Have you ever been to Tarrytown, Cecilie?"

"No. Mother used to speak of it."

"That is where I first met your mother," said the man gravely. "I've often wondered if the place is much changed. I dare say I could show you the house where she lived when I first knew her. We'll start as soon as you like. Get your bonnet on!"

"Bonnet, indeed," laughed Cecilie; she made an indignant little grimace at him as she turned to leave the room. "It's only old ladies who wear bonnets," she declared.

She looked back at him from the open door laughingly. Suddenly she came back to where he stood by the window.

"You're very kind to me," she said, coloring shyly.

Pretty speeches came awkwardly to Cecilie's lips; it had never been easy for her to express her feelings adequately. But Vanstone seemed to understand.

"My dear, I am only too happy to give you everything in my power," he said with some emotion. "It's only small reparation I can make after all for what's gone. And I am glad that you'll never want, Cecilie, whatever happens. When I die——"

She laid soft fingers across his lips.

"You're not to say that!"

He looked pleased.

"You don't quite hate me then, Cecilie?"

She hesitated, flushed a little in con-

fusion, then put her arms round his neck and kissed him for the first time of her own accord.

"There!" she said playfully, to cover what she feared he might consider a display of sentimentality. "I never do that unless I like a person very, *very* much."

She kissed him again softly, and ran off to get ready.

Cecilie did her best to enjoy that drive with her father. She determinedly exerted herself to talk and amuse him. It was not her fault if her thoughts would fly back to that morning seven weeks ago when she and Kathy had driven to Red Bank with Roger Buchanan.

For a moment she closed her eyes, pretending that when she opened them again she would see *his* face beside her instead of her father's.

In vain she called herself ungrateful, reminded herself that this man had given her everything. Had he not taken her from the drab monotony of her existence in Brixton's and given her a place in the world? As for Buchanan—bitter memory convulsed her again—she hated him. She never wished to see him any more unless it lay in her power to make him suffer as he had made her.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Vanstone at her side, and Cecilie started and came back to the present. She laughed, not very mirthfully.

"You wouldn't believe me if I were to tell you," she said.

"Should I not? Try me."

She sat up with sudden energy. For a moment her white teeth caught her lower lip hard, then:

"I was thinking of the person I hate most in all the world," she said deliberately.

"I remember your mother once saying," said Vanstone thoughtfully, "that to hate a man or woman much one must first have loved that man or woman very much. I hope it is not true of you, Cecilie?"

The girl began to speak, then suddenly she started to her feet with a smothered cry.

A heavily laden truck bumping along in front of them, had all at once pulled to the wrong side of the road. For a moment it seemed as if a smash were inevitable. But with a sudden swerve of the wheel, the chauffeur got clear. Then, unexpectedly, there was a horrible grinding wrench, and Cecilie remembered nothing more.

When she came to she was lying propped against the bank that bordered one side of the road, and some one was trying to force water between her lips.

She opened puzzled eyes on the face of a man bending over her. She lay quite still, wondering whom he could be.

A few yards away a laden truck was drawn up at the curb. Smithers, the chauffeur, was standing near it. There was a stream of blood running down his face—*a stream of blood!*

Sudden memory rushed back to her. She tried to stagger to her feet, but the strange man kept her down.

"Lie still! You'll be all right directly. The car turned over. You're not hurt, are you?"

"No—no!" She felt weak and incoherent; she resented this man's authoritative manner. "Smithers is hurt. Let me get up! Smithers is hurt, and where—where is my father?"

She struggled fiercely against the man's detaining arms; after a moment he let her go.

She got to her feet, feeling a little dizzy and sick. Every bone in her body ached. She looked round helplessly, for the moment blinded by the hot sun.

Then she saw a long dark shape lying by the roadside covered with a rug from the car, a long dark shape like a body.

The strange man standing beside her put a hand beneath her arm. She wondered with a sort of weary contempt if he expected her to faint.

"He was dead when we picked him up," he said gently. "He must have fallen on his head. If it had not been for him you would have been killed. He had his arms round you. His body saved you."

Cecilie looked at him vaguely. She heard what he said, but the words conveyed nothing. Suddenly she dropped on her knees beside the dead man.

"Oh!" she said with a little bitter cry. "And I never told him that I had begun to love him. Oh, I wish I had; I wish I had!"

CHAPTER XVI.

CECILIE'S ADVERTISEMENT.

"If you really mean what you say," said Cecilie with a touch of exasperation in her voice, "the only thing left for me to do is advertise."

"Advertise!" Kathy echoed the word blankly.

"Yes." Cecilie fell to pacing the room restlessly.

The summer had gone; the days were shorter; there was frost in the air.

A whole month had passed since the death of Cecilie's father, only a month. Sometimes it seemed to Cecilie that she had lived ten years since that July morning when she and Kathy went down to Spring Lake.

"You all tell me that I can't live by myself," she said now, with a shade of petulance in her voice. "If I were thirty I'd snap my fingers and do as I like, but unfortunately I'm only twenty-five, and rich. Kathy, sometimes it makes me afraid to think how rich I really am."

"I don't think it's anything to be afraid about," said Kathy prosaically. "If there is, it's the kind of fear most people like to have."

Cecilie had been trying to get Kathy to live with her, and Kathy had refused.

She had spent the last half hour trying to justify that refusal, and now she began all over again.

"It wouldn't do, Cecilie, dear; I'm not a bit the sort of woman to chaperon a girl like you—rich and beautiful."

Cecilie made an impatient gesture.

"You're the only friend I've got in the world. I think it's the least you can do."

Kathy sat staring before her. Her hands were folded hard in her lap; her mind was troubled.

"If you put it like that," she said at length slowly.

Cecilie rounded on her.

"I *don't* put it like that! I only *ask* you! We've always got on well together, but if you really don't want to come——"

"It isn't that. Why will you persist in saying it is? You want some one who will take you out and about, a society woman who can introduce you to all the people you ought to know. How can I do that? I should die of fright if a woman with position spoke to me. I should faint if I had to go to a ball. Can't Mr. Geddes suggest something?"

"It was Mr. Geddes who suggested advertising. He says that there are heaps of society women who would willingly take me about and let me live under their wing, so to speak, if I paid them. Doesn't it seem a queer kind of profession—hawking eligible girls?"

"I should advertise and see what happens," said Kathy.

If she had been sure in her own mind that it was her duty to give up her work and live with Cecilie, Kathy would have done it without a word, but she was not sure.

She could see the difference in their two natures if Cecilie chose to ignore it. She knew instinctively that she was

not at all the kind of companion her friend needed. She would have given her life for Cecilie if need be, but in this matter she was obstinate.

"You want some one older than me," she said again. "Some one who will look after you."

Cecilie laughed recklessly.

"Look after me. What an idea! I've always managed to look after myself, haven't I?"

"I know, but it was different before you had all this money. All the men will be after you. They'll all want to marry you, and you'll want some one to keep them off, and see that you choose a really nice man. Mr. Geddes was quite right when he said you needed a person older than me."

"Mr. Geddes is a stuffy old lawyer," said Cecilie impatiently. "I know father thought the world of him, or I wouldn't put up with his old-maidish ways for a moment. And as for choosing a really nice man—I shall never get married!"

"People always say that," said Kathy calmly. "And it's very silly. Look in the glass and then have the audacity to say it again."

Cecilie obeyed half impatiently; she caught a momentary reflection of her slim figure, black-robed and somber, and her face just now a little flushed and angry looking.

"I shall never marry," she said again impetuously. "I hate men!"

She walked over to the window and looked out across Washington Square.

She had moved into rooms in this house after her father's death, under the nomnial chaperonage of a widow. But Cecilie hated the widow, and the widow was thinking of marrying again. The whole situation was most unsatisfactory.

"There's something I want to tell you," said Kathy suddenly. She looked a little embarrassed; she kept her eyes from Cecilie's face.

"Well?" Cecilie did not turn from the window; she knew by instinct what was coming.

"I heard one of the instructors talking about—about Mr. Buchanan the other day," Kathy began slowly. "Of course, he did not know that I knew him. He has been abroad since—since we left Spring Lake—for his health. I suppose you didn't know?"

"I? How should I know? It's of no interest to me."

"No, dear, but I thought I'd tell you. Professor Graeme said that he was returning to New York this week."

"How interesting!" There was bitter sarcasm in Cecilie's voice. Kathy winced. It hurt her to hear her friend speak in such a tone.

She got up and walked across to her.

"Cecilie," she asked bravely, "have you quite, *quite* forgotten him?"

Cecilie's fierce eyes met hers unfalteringly.

"Could *you* forget a man who treated you as he treated me?" she asked harshly. "No, I haven't forgotten him, but if you mean do I still care for him—no! A thousand times no! I think I hate him more than any woman has ever hated a man." She drew a deep breath. "Don't talk about him, Kathy. It—it just rouses the devil in me."

She broke off with a shaky laugh; she walked over to the writing table.

"Come and help me word an advertisement," she said.

Cecilie found life very wearisome after her father's death. She was lonely and bored, and the weight and responsibility of her newly acquired wealth depressed her.

She missed Vanstone more than she would admit, even to Kathy. She had not realized, till he was gone, how much she had really grown to care for him. His tragic death left a horrible sense of blackness in her life.

John Geddes, Vanston's lawyer, had

done his best for the girl; but he was old and out of date. He could not keep pace with Cecilie's advanced ideas. She shocked him, and he filled her with angry impatience.

"You forget that I'm not a child," Cecilie challenged him once angrily. "I've had to work for my living. I've kept myself for years. Why can't I be allowed to live alone now?"

"Because now it's quite different," he insisted mildly. "You are young, beautiful, and, above all, an heiress. Your father left me as trustee. I must insist that you observe the conventionalities a little. When you marry——"

"I shall never marry," Cecilie interrupted.

He spread his hands deferentially.

"That is entirely a matter for you to decide," he said with the ghost of a smile.

But he got his own way about the chaperon; a few judicious inquiries, an advertisement insterted in the proper quarters, and one morning he went round to Cecilie smiling and urbane. He carried a bundle of letters in his hand.

"I have had some most satisfactory replies to my inquiries," he said, even as they shook hands. "Some ladies in the very highest society." He selected a letter and handed it to Cecilie. She shook her head.

"I don't want to read them. Decide as you please. I shall hate it anyway, but you seem so determined. I really don't care who I go to."

Mr. Geddes smiled.

"If you really mean that, I have already picked out the reply which I consider to be the most suitable. I know the lady's family quite well, and they have some of the oldest Manhattan blood in their veins. I am sure you will like her and find her in every way desirable. She is willing to take you everywhere and introduce you to everybody worth knowing. Now she is very anxious to have a personal interview."

Cecilie frowned. She hated this idea of trampled freedom. If she could have had her way she would have packed her bags and gone off on a solitary tour of the world. But it had been her father's wish that she take her place in society, and, out of respect for his wishes alone, she at length had agreed to be fettered.

"Who is she anyway?" she asked with veiled impatience. "I may as well know her name if I am to see her."

Mr. Geddes fixed his glasses more firmly on his nose and took the letter he had selected from the bundle he had brought. He scanned the pages. Finally he turned to the last one.

"Her name," he said with pleased inflection, "is Mrs. Philip Buchanan."

BEAUTIFUL ROSE ADAIR

By VICTOR A. BERRY

ALL alone in the firelight,
When dismal winds are blowing,
And the rain is falling in the night,
And the sad tide ebbing, going—
With a fog horn blowing out at sea
To tear at the lonesome heart of me
Till I dream of the days that used to be
With beautiful Rose Adair.

Oh, if I only knew to-night
That she is alive and well!
And I shudder to think where lights are bright
That lying tongues may tell
Those treacherous tales we all have told
Of flashing gems, and cloth of gold—
(I'd die to-night were such dross sold
To beautiful Rose Adair!)

And I think of that August night agone
Down by the purple sea,
How we talked—ah, talked!—till rosy dawn
Smiled upon her and me.
If I'd only known her value then;
If Time could but turn back again!
Why didn't I say the right words when
I could to Rose Adair?

Beautiful Rose Adair,
Beautiful Rose Adair,
Where are you smiling through the night?
Echo answers: "Where!"
Wherever your dainty footsteps roam,
Think of the cottage by the foam
Where a fond heart breaks. Oh, just come home,
Beautiful Rose Adair.

Editor's Note: This department is conducted for the benefit of the readers of "Love Story Magazine" as well as for their entertainment, but neither the publishers nor the author can assume responsibility for the reliability of any statement made herein, for incorrect data is often furnished, even when the sender has every reason to believe it correct. Wynn does not make any claim whatever to superhuman knowledge or power, making all deductions by means of the positions of the planets alone, and the results must be taken for what they are worth in the light of your experience.

In order that the greatest number of readers may use the department, each is limited to asking two questions. They should be questions about yourself or your problems. No questions about lost articles, the stock market or gambling will be answered.

When asking questions, give as much as you can of the following data: date, month, year and place of birth, the hour of the day or night if possible, and the sex.

Answers to Questions.

What are my lucky and unlucky periods for 1923?

Will love have a part in my life? Born October 14, 1906. Hartford, Connecticut.

PHYLIS.

You are independent, philosophical, with a good imagination, a sense of humor, and clear reasoning powers. You find a good deal of opposition when you express yourself. Your weaknesses are lack of concentration and industry. You are attractive to older men.

You are popular socially.

You will probably receive a promotion during the first week of July, which will be a benefit to you if you do not yield to a nervousness that will assail you at that time. The end of August brings you social entertainment. You will be very active around the first of September. Your imagination will be active between the 25th and 29th of October, during which time it would be well for you to seize any inspirations that you might have along literary lines. The last week in November will be very pleasant socially. Christmas holidays will find you in a peculiar and erratic state of mind.

You are romantic, but are too young to think of love affairs. Your ideal mate will be an elderly man. He will appear in your life in your thirtieth year.

Will I ever marry?

What is my future? Born November 29, 1905. 11.45 p. m. A. A. A.

You have a great love of music. You are extravagant, careless, and thoughtless. Study of yourself will show you

that at times you are too direct in your expression and ill-tempered on occasion. You should train yourself to be economical of your time, your money and your strength. You will marry. Your chart indicates a proposition of marriage in 1926. But your best opportunity is due in the thirty-second year of your life, which will give you a chance to get over a rough period in the winter of 1928 and 1929 when your Mars progresses to a conjunction of Saturn. At present your studious activities are excellent and will continue until the winter of 1925 and 1926, when you will probably receive some honor along educational or literary lines.

What am I best fitted to do?
Should I remain in my present position?
Born August 16, 1897. H. M. B.

You are distinctly a fire person. Your Sun was in the fire sign of Leo and the Moon in the fire sign Aries when you were born. This makes you hasty and inattentive to details, which is shown by the fact that you failed to tell me what your present position is. You can succeed in work which is concerned with metals, as a mechanic, as a salesman, or as a minor executive, according to your training. You want to be the boss and are dissatisfied and unpleasant when you find others able to direct your movements. You are unwilling to admit that the other fellow is as able as you are. Make friends among those who are your superiors and do not try to treat them as equals, for they will resent it. Put more attention on detail, doing each small part of your work correctly. You will find the big things will come to you and that your troubles will be over. You are not a born leader, as you are not magnetic. Curb your erratic temper and moodiness.

What about my health?
Will love plan an important part in my life?
Born May 15, 1905. R. A. G.

At the time of your birth the luminaries were in the two signs ruled by Venus, which brings a great deal of affection into your life. You have a tendency to be too sympathetic with friends and too harsh with others. Your worst faults are those of jealousy and intolerance.

Your nativity does not show a congenial husband. You would be wise to consider very carefully and investigate deeply the character and reputation of any man to whom you may be attracted. You are apt to be very attractive to all kinds of men and will therefore have the opportunity of choice from the best. If you were born just before sunrise you will marry twice. The first time to a brutal and ungovernable man. But if you were born just before sunset you will only marry once and will have a much better husband. If you were born at other than these two hours it will be a matter of choice.

What has 1923 for me?
What about my little boy? Born February 9, 1902. A. A. G.

You are a woman of positive expression, an inclination to religious things, and a great love of your family. You are distinctly intuitive and sensitive, but are quite sociable and pleasant. There is a tendency in your nature to be extremely emotional, having very strong likes and dislikes. You are able to read character by intuition and are seldom wrong.

There is nothing unpleasant for you in 1923. In fact this is going to be a very comfortable and happy year for you, with the promise of some intellectual development.

Your son will be an independent, clear-headed, materialistic, and somewhat reserved man. He will possess stability, pride, belief in conventions, and his energy, which will cause him to travel constantly. He could be trained

in medical lines and would achieve success. Teach him economy.

Will there be real happiness and success for me?
What part will love play in my life? Born January 20, 1900. M. G. G.

You are harmonious, magnetic, musical, tactful, sociable and have a very active mind. You are a clever conversationalist and you are quite able to express your ideas in writing.

Real happiness is in store for you if you will follow out the injunction of your own chart, which tells you to work in the service of humanity.

You are attractive and could have been married long ago, but have been protected by your critical and selective ability, which has stood you in good stead. You will attract men who are absolutely unworthy of you. You could get along very nicely with a sober, practical-minded man, who was born within a month after you were and in any other year than yours, or one who was born around the middle of September in any year.

Will the future become bright for my sister?
Her health? Born February 12, 1893.
E. W.'s Sister.

Your sister is an active, energetic and somewhat nervous woman. She has lately been experiencing some strange manifestations in her health, because Saturn has been revolving in the sphere he occupied at the time of her birth. She will experience another acute touch of the same or similar trouble during the latter part of June or July this year. It will then gradually go away and not return until after she is sixty years old. Your sister is a woman of naturally pleasant disposition. She is quick of tongue. She has difficulty in saving money. She can look forward to a comfortable and pleasant future.

Will my sister succeed?
Does the man with whom I correspond love me? Born November 25, 1906.
H. A. M.

You have a hot temper. You are easily hurt by imaginary and unintended slights of others.

The gentleman of whom you speak is not the right one for you to marry your chart shows. Your mind is not in a condition to make a wise decision matrimonially. In your twenty-second year you will meet a literary or artistic man, who will be the right one for you.

I am unable to answer questions concerning people whose birth dates are not given.

What are my prospects for marriage?
What are my fortunate and unfortunate periods for 1923? Born December 13, 1892.
J. A. W.

You are proud and sensitive in matters concerning money and women. Your horoscope tells me that you are contemplating marriage with an older woman. It would be well for you to wait a year before taking this step. If you are not married, as your question implies, I am sorry to say that you have missed your best chance for happiness in passing up a love affair you had about five years ago. Your good periods of 1923 are as follows; the first and second weeks of April; the middle of October which will be preceded by one not so good; the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth of November, which will follow an unsettled week, and the period from the tenth to the seventeenth of December will be pleasant and profitable. Beware of the ides of March of any year, for you have Mars on the spot occupied by the Sun on the twelfth to the fourteenth of March.

What am I best fitted for in business?
Will I make a happy marriage? Born June 26, 1905. M. M. W.

Yours is one of the most interesting charts I have ever seen. I would like to know what you make of your life

twenty years from now. You are in possession of some of the most remarkable powers that the fates have to bestow. You have foresight and intuition to a remarkable degree. You love harmony. You have energy enough and self-reliance sufficient to do the thing you know must be done, without fear or favor.

You would do well as a saleswoman or as a personal secretary.

Your marriage will be very happy if you wait for a banker, doctor, lawyer, or a professional man.

Shall I continue to live with my husband? Shall I leave him and take up professional dancing? Born August 27, 1904.
G. F. D.

With all your faults you expect your husband to be perfect, according to your horoscope. You are positive, exacting, and critical, somewhat selfish, yet with a strong domestic tendency.

As a professional dancer you would not be financially successful.

Could I be trained successfully to be a nurse?
Will love play an important part in my life? Born July 12, 1906. J. F. D.

You are energetic and ambitious. You lack concentration and careful judgment. You dislike being advised by others.

I would advise you do anything but try to become a nurse. You have too much sympathy for the sufferings of others. Try domestic science.

Love certainly will play a strong part in your life. Forget love until you are thirty-six years old. A great love is in the offing at that time.

I am studying to be a stenographer. Will I succeed? Born November 4, 1906.
R. P. W.

You have an active, aspiring and ambitious mind. You have two distinct natures on the surface and yet within you are very fixed and solid. You are well able to express yourself and are proud, studious, and fastidious.

Stenography is a good occupation for you. Try to overcome your tendency to doubt the motives of others. Have as much faith in them as you want them to have in you.

You are impatient. And this impatience will mean success.

GOOD DAYS IN THE WEEK.

Is your Birthday in this List?

Sunday, June 24th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 1st or 2d, or if it falls between October 16th and 31st.

Monday, June 25th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 2d, 3d, or 4th, or if it falls between October 31st and November 14th.

Tuesday, June 26th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 4th or 5th or if it falls between November 14th and 29th.

Wednesday, June 27th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 5th or 6th, or if it falls between November 29th and December 14th.

Thursday, June 28th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 6th, 7th, or 8th, or if it falls between December 14th and September 28th.

Friday, June 29th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 8th or 9th, or if it falls between December 28th and January 10th.

Saturday, June 30th.

For Love Affairs, if your birthday is June 9th or 10th, or if it falls between January 10th and 23d.

THE WHOLE WEEK.

The whole week will be a good time for you to increase your business or apply for promotion, providing you are worthy, if your birthday comes between June 22d and July 2d, or if it is the 2d or 3d of November.

NOT SO GOOD.

If your birthday is August 9th, 10th, or 11th, you are inclined to be nervous and to worry, but do not take yourself too seriously.

Strange or unhappy experiences, and possibly accidents, will befall you next week if your birthday is March 8th or 9th, or between July 9th and 13th.

Guard your health if you were born October 6th, 7th, or 8th.

YOU

YOU are the light of the dawning,
You are the sun and the sea,
You are the moon and the stars and the sky,
You are Eternity.

You are the breath of the breezes,
You are the dew on the sod,
You are all beauty and life and love,
You are my Truth and God.

EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER.

The Friend in Need

Department conducted by Laura Alston Brown

IT is difficult, sometimes, to know when love ceases to be love and becomes selfishness of that most cruel sort, the sort which figures in the making of so many lonely women.

There are so many of them, these women who hurry out of rooms or tiny apartments in the morning, hang over a desk all day, and then at night hurry back, alone, to the room or the apartment; breakfast alone, lunch alone, dinner alone—always alone! They are moderately successful women usually, sometimes even more than moderately so, because they're generally the women who think and feel and understand, but they are not happy women!

They are victims, most of them, victims of love that has ceased to be love and become selfishness.

The writer of the following letter is the victim of such love and of her own blind loyalty.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I want to tell you the story of my life, and I wish you would give me some advice. My mother could not get along with her husband, so she returned home, where I was born. She got a divorce later. We have lived with her mother and father ever since. I am now thirty-three years of age. My mother had a small income with which she helped bear the expense of sending me to school. I was graduated when I was eighteen.

I taught school for six years, then took a business course and have been working ever since. I have done my part financially in keeping up the house where we all live. The house is mine, though in my grandparents' name during their lifetime. They have a farm, a store, and a dwelling house, all of which they rent.

When I was seventeen my grandmother's youngest son was killed suddenly, shattering her nerves. She is seventy-five or seven, grandfather eighty-three. He has always fussed with her. Mother said she would wake up in the night and hear him fussing over just nothing.

Grandmother is old-fashioned, I suppose. She does not believe in a boy and girl going out together. I never cared much about going with a boy, though I had plenty of chances. I knew there would be a fuss, for if I had a boy friend he would want to go places evenings.

I have sacrificed my whole life for them. I never had parties, never went any place without mother or grandmother. I have had to put cloths on my shoes to keep from making a noise in the house. My grandparents are simply crazy about me, even so, and have done everything for me. Still I feel that I have repaid them, for I have sacrificed my childhood, girlhood, never going any place except to church and Sunday school.

Last May I had an offer from a very fine young man to take me to an entertainment. Mother had an awful time getting me off. She had to go along in order that I might go.

She has had to go every time I went, and when she couldn't, I had to make excuses. I never went any place alone with him except once, then I slipped away from granny. She found out, and mother said she could not stand—she is not very well—to go through another fuss like the one she had to.

Mother does not want to tag along every time. Of course I don't mind her going sometimes, but I want to go by myself once in a while. I never go to a show, dance, or anything like that, only to church services, entertainments, and socials.

My grandparents won't let me have company at night. Mother and grannie have had a number of fusses, and my beau has heard—that is, he knows something is wrong. I would not have him know why granny will not let me go alone with him. He

would think little of her perhaps. She told me that she would positively not let me go any place with him alone, that we could not live in the same house if I did.

I think that is wrong of her, and that she is not treating me fairly. I do not care about having company at night because I need the rest. Granny does not object to my going with him. She said she wished I would marry before she died. Every one goes out alone with one's sweetheart, but I can't unless I go against her wishes. I can't possibly skip out, for she is always up and watching.

Grandfather does not want me to marry at all and does not like my beau. But the young man is a perfect gentleman. Every one speaks well of him and always has.

He has his mother to support, though she has other children who could help support her. They all say that he cannot leave his mother, and I have been advised not to go into the house with her because we couldn't get along. If we should marry—we are not yet engaged—I would not want to live with any one. I think a married couple should live by themselves.

I don't know what to do. Many girls would go against their grandmother and would not be as submissive as I have been. I am no longer a girl, but a woman getting on in years. If my beau were many a man he would not stand our not being able ever to go alone. He does not seem to care, but I know he would rather that we went by ourselves sometimes.

What shall I do, defy her and let her go to him, telling him that he cannot come back, that it does not look nice for a boy and girl to go out alone? Or shall I go on as I have, skipping off whenever I can and being very unhappy? Such conditions nearly worry the life out of me.

I don't want mother to be fussed with. Granny does not say much to me, for I won't say much to her, and I can keep my temper better. I don't want granny to talk matters over with the man, as she will if things continue very long. I'm not happy, and mother is not happy when I am not.

Mother says for me to go on, but if I did, there would be a fuss and the man would find out. Mother would leave, and then people would talk. They would possibly say that we were not good to the old people, went off and left them cold-heartedly. All this I want to avoid. What would you do, what do you think?

Should you kiss a man when he asks you to be his wife? Is it all right to kiss him good night when you see him only once or twice a week? Will he throw it up to you if he should marry you? Is it all right for him to put his arms about you? I know it is not right if the couple is not engaged.

Would you marry if you were situated as I am? Do you think I could be happy away from mother? She says that she will not live with me, that she thinks young married people should live alone. M. F. D.

There are tragedies and tragedies, but that of the lonely woman is the greatest. The world is so full of them, these women with hearts so loyal that, through a false sense of obligation, they have foregone their own chance for happiness.

Love, my child, is the greatest thing in the world, and it is the only thing for a woman. If she has a right to demand nothing else of the world, she has a right to demand love.

Parents and our grandparents have a place in the world, a very big place, but the hearts of the younger generation should not be governed by the heads of the older. You must assert yourself. You must be master of your own life. You still have youth, much lies ahead of you, but you have come to the place where you should no longer fritter your years. You should be building for the happiness of your own old age!

Your grandmother should be made to understand this. She should be made to understand that only selfishness of an extreme sort would insist that a girl of this period would live and act like one of two generations ago. She is robbing you of girlhood. She will rob you of wifehood if you will submit.

You have reached the age where you no longer need a chaperon when you go out with a man friend for two or three hours in the evening.

As for kisses—a girl of your type, with fine sense of right and wrong, can safely rely upon her own heart to tell her when to kiss and when not to kiss. Whether a man should or should not kiss a woman when he asks her to be

his wife is beside the issue. They do, my dear, they do—should and shouldn't forgotten.

Don't marry any man with whom you could not be happy on a desert island —away from mother, family, and friends of all sort!

It would interest me very much, and my readers, I'm sure, to know how you finally settle your life.

Is Love Negligent?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have been reading some of the letters you have answered in the LOVE STORY MAGAZINE, and I have decided to tell you my little story and ask you to tell me what your ideas are about my fiancé.

I met him two years ago, and only got to see him a few times, when he had to go home in another city. While he was gone he wrote me regularly. After a year and a half he proposed to me through the mail. I accepted him. He said he could not come to me then, but about four months later he sent me a diamond ring asking me to wear it on my left hand, third finger, and promise him I would be his as soon as he could come after me. I did. About two months after that, he came to see me for a week, but then had to leave again. While he was with me he repeatedly told me of his love for me and that he was going to make me his as soon as he possibly could, but asked me to wait for him. Then he left and he is writing to me again. He is young and has not yet started out in life for himself, but is going to college at present. When he finishes college he wants me to marry him as soon as he gets a good job so that he can take care of me, he says. I love him. I think I've loved him from the first day I met him and I'm willing to wait for him as long as he thinks best. Now he doesn't care if I go with other young men, and tells me to have all the good times I can. And he goes with other girls in the city where he is in college. Do you think he really loves me if he doesn't care if I go with other young men, and he goes with other girls while he is away? Sometimes it is two weeks before I get a letter from him, but when I do his letters are always full of love, and how he longs to come get me. And he tells me what good times he has going to dances, and I know that is why he makes me wait so long for a letter sometimes. He is running around having a good time, and does not take the time to write me, It makes me wonder about his love for me when he neglects me like that.

Mother always tells me that he does not love me because he did not know me long enough to love me. When he makes me wait to hear from him she says that he wouldn't do that if he loved me. Do you think mother is wrong in telling me that? Do you think he could love me even though we have been together so very little? Mother always tells me that I must wait until he makes a success before I can marry him, don't you think I should marry him and help him make a success? I am twenty years old and have been told several times that I am not old enough to know what love means. Don't you think I am old enough to know when I am in love?

Do you think that when I doubt his love, even though it is only a tiny bit, that that is a sign that I do not love him enough? He is older than I am. I wish you would answer me and tell me just what *you* think of him. Tell me if you think he really loves me, and if you think he is doing the right thing under the circumstances, if he does love me. JUST "TEDDY."

Teddy, my girl, the young man probably thinks you are the nicest girl friend he has, he's probably very fond of you and very sincere in his feeling, but he's sensible withal! He seems to understand, Teddy, that which you have lost sight of—and we women are apt to do that!—youth is a fleeting thing at best and we must enjoy it while it is with us, even though our ideal of happiness is not possible at the particular period through which we are passing. He is at school, Teddy. You can't be there. He misses you, but does the only thing he can—makes friends with others. You should do that, too, child. As it is, you are making the mistake which so many women make, that of eliminating, for some one particular interest, every other social interest, and thus losing much of the youth and attractiveness which would keep you charming to the one particular man.

Of course, you're old enough to love sincerely. But do go out with other friends, Teddy; don't bind yourself with

promises just yet, forget the seriousness of love, have a good time, and stay girlishly lovely against the day when the young man will come back from college and his fun to you.

It is a very fine thing to marry and help your husband attain success, but don't marry until the lad is earning enough to support two!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: My simple but sincere replies to Crystal and Man Hater are as follows: What is love? Love is the holiest, most sacred gift of God. The man of whom Crystal speaks does not know its meaning. He has never loved, and poor little Crystal should not pine for a worthless fellow but keep on being a good girl. Some day her Prince Charming will come and be proud to know her.

Man Hater is certainly prejudiced against the opposite sex. She underrates the value of love; real love comes only once in a lifetime. She probably thinks that my defense of love is the result of the fact that I am young and unmarried, have never had trouble. But if so, she is all wrong. I am young, just twenty-two, but I have been married for three years, and we have had our share of trouble. We were separated for three months, but neither of us ceased to love. We came to an understanding and tried life together again. Am I sorry? Decidedly not! God never put a finer man on earth. I love him to distraction, and he cares for me. We have a beautiful baby boy that holds our love pure in his little hands. We are poor—my husband makes twenty-five dollars a week, a comfortable living. We haven't many earthly goods, but we have each other and "Sonny." We have our ups and downs, but love always conquers in the end. We put our quarrels aside with a kiss. We are still and always will be sweethearts.

So I disagree with Man Hater. There is such a thing as love. It is the golden conqueror. Mother love is beautiful, but a wife's love is the most sacred, supreme gift of the Almighty. I could talk forever of love, for I was an orphan, and my husband's love was the first to enter my life. Death itself cannot finish our love. Do not think me foolish, Mrs. Brown, but I wish every one would revere the word "love."

SWEETHEARTS STILL.

After reading this letter, I'm sure no one will have courage enough to complain that her husband earns only twenty-five dollars a week.

Schenectady, N. Y.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: You ask what love is. It is hard to define. Let me tell you what my husband thinks love is. He says he loves me. He works hard and brings what money he earns home to me for debts and personal expenses. I do pretty much as I please with it. He says if he didn't love me he would not do this. Is that love? He is always insinuating that I am doing things out of the way.

I believe that I love my husband. I like to stay home with him and my baby, who is two and one half years old. I am a good housekeeper and an excellent cook. At least my husband says so.

He often says to me, "I don't believe you love me." Do you think, Mrs. Brown, that one has to wear a placard announcing one's love to the world in order to have one's husband know it? Shouldn't he know from the things that his wife does?

KITTEN B.

No, it isn't necessary to wear a placard announcing one's love. It isn't necessary to say anything about it. It isn't even necessary to love. But it is a pleasant thing. It lifts the life of an everyday sort of person out of the realm of the ordinary. And surely it is worth while to tell people things which make them happy. I'd advise you, if you want to keep that hard-working husband of yours bringing his money home to you, to be a little bit considerate of him. Tell him, once in a while, that you love him. A clean house and well-cooked meals are much, but not all of being a wife.

Happiness in Sacrifice

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have never had occasion to write you before, though I am a constant reader of LOVE STORY, and can scarcely wait to read your Friend in Need. When a person has had trouble, she can always sympathize with others. Your department is really a friend.

I felt to-day that I just must answer the letter from Man Hater. No doubt, there will be many answers, for I do not see how any one could say that she doesn't believe in love. Surely, the woman who wrote the letter must be very unhappy.

Perhaps she gave her love to a person who was worthless. Perhaps in her childhood she was not taught that "God is love" and that she should look on the sunny side of things. For without love what would life be? I admit that love is largely sacrifice, but there is real joy in being able to sacrifice for the right person.

Girls, in this age, are too forward and take too much for granted. Why, I would sooner go all my life vainly loving a man than to show him I cared in any way. I should a thousand times rather remain single all my life than to marry a person I did not love.

What can persons expect? It is hard to get along with people at times when you do love them. To think of marrying a man one does not love is horrible.

I only wish I had the time to tell my own sad experience, but I haven't. Some time soon I'm coming back to do so. Until then I wish you and the circle good luck.

LASSIE.

Thanks for your good wishes, Lassie.

More Proof

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I cannot help writing after reading Man Hater's letter. I know there is love between man and woman. I have been married fourteen years. My husband fell in love with me the first time he saw me, and I know he still loves me. He says he does even more than he did the day we were married. I know I love him. We have seen plenty of happiness together. I do all I can to make him happy, and he does all he can to make me happy. He has always been mighty good to me. If he did not love me, he would not be so good to me. I don't do anything that he does not like, for I think that is apt to turn a man against his wife. A HAPPY WIFE.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Recently I read the letter from a Man Hater. She is not alone in her belief. I do not believe in love. I have loved, and though my love at first brought happiness, it did not last. I am very unhappy.

We had planned our marriage, but one night when I could not do as he wished, he became angry and left and has never come back. I have seen him since, but he hardly recognized me. I know that I was right in our difference.

There is only mother love, none between man and woman. A few months ago I could not have written such a letter, for I was happy and in love; but now I am in despair. I know all the readers will say that I am better off without a man like him, but I can't forget. UNHAPPY MABEL.

A Wish Worth While

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I wish to say a few things to Man Hater. I think that *she* is the foolish one. No doubt, she has been disappointed in love, but for her to say that there are no true men is wrong. I have a true man. We were married five years ago and have a baby two years old. My husband is more of a lover to-day than he was the day we were married. He never goes any place unless I go, and that's his choice, not mine. I have all the pretty clothes that I want, and he never speaks crossly to me. Don't think we don't have arguments, for we do; but he is never angry, just shows me in what I am wrong in a kind way. I know there is love between man and woman, and I am sorry for Man Hater, because she is not happy. My married life has been all happiness, and I wish every one could say the same. A VERY HAPPY WIFE.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After reading the letter from Man Hater, I cannot resist writing to you. Somehow I feel like that myself. I married a man who drank. I tried in every way to help him and at last offered to go to parties with him in order that he would have no desire to go with others. My one fault in his eyes was that I was jealous, that I had the blues and cried.

So now he has cast me aside for that one reason. I worked twelve hours a day seven days in the week—I am a waitress—and he scarcely ever worked. I put up with much that I feel was worse than having a jealous wife. I can't truthfully say that I hate him, but I do believe that there is no happiness when one loves with all her heart as Man Hater says. It's give, give, give. I also agree that there isn't a true man in the world. I have seen a great many men, but every one if tempted was willing to cheat.

BLOND BOBBIE.

I think you're a bit hard on men, Blond Bobbie. The world is so full of men who are square that the others stand out by contrast and thus are the ones we hear of most often.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have often asked myself the same question as Crystal asks, "Does it pay to be good?" Always the answer has been that it does. No man is worth

making you lose your self-respect. I am just thirty, and life for me is a struggle for an existence for myself and the kiddies. I am considered good looking—that has brought me no happiness—and I pass for twenty-five or six. If I find it worth while to be good, I am sure Crystal or any girl will find it so.

I think that no man or woman who has led a life which is not good has any right to marry a good person. The latter deserves better. I cannot understand a man who can jilt a girl for a vampire. He deserves just what he will probably get in time. It is not true that love walks over hearts or breaks up homes, as mine has been broken up.

I cannot credit the theory that one could be happily married to any of ten thousand persons. I think that there is a mate or complement for every person, and unless one meets that person one is unhappy.

Do carry this appeal to the young girls, Mrs. Brown: Live up to your ideals! Don't think that life is not worth while without a man. Make the most of your youth and opportunities. Be careful of a once-married man. Some are worthy, but so many are not. Use your head instead of your heart in such instances. A HOOSIER.

Yours is the attitude which comes after struggle and sacrifice have humanized the heart. I hope your letter finds its way to those who need its message.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I enjoy Friend in Need very much, and I have always wanted to write to you, but have hesitated because I am a poor letter writer. But I am going to give my opinion of the letters from Crystal and Man Hater.

It is impossible to explain love. There is a true pal for every one in the world; but some persons do not stop to ask, "Is this my pal for life?" They rush headlong into marriage, then say that there is no such thing as love.

I do not think that it is right for one who has not lived a good life to expect one who has, man or woman. It is not fair. You, Crystal, say that you have been jilted and want to know whether it is worth while to be good. It is. Don't grieve over him. He is not a real man. A good man certainly always wants a good girl. Some day the man who is looking for a good girl will find you, and you will both be happy.

Now a word to Man Hater: There is love between man and woman, for I love and am loved. Certainly there is some sacrifice in love, but each does his part. There is true happiness in love, and there are true men. You say that you became like the man. Did you ever think that probably the men you laughed at were true and good? As for mother love, there cannot be any if the father was not loved in the beginning.

TRUE PAL.

You said much in your last sentence, True Pal.

New Standards?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: There is so much unhappiness caused, simply because people do not know what love is, and because most of them refuse to consider the question seriously until too late.

I shall believe that I have done a good deed well, if I can help to awaken the people to the seriousness of love and marriage. Right thinking, makes right living, and the right kind of love insures successful marriages.

It seems rather strange, when you think of it, that the people must be taught what love is, and one may ask the question: Why? In my opinion it is due to the laxity of the modern conventions. A few years ago, youth was not accorded the freedom that it is to-day, and courtships were of longer duration, and very formal. There were few hasty marriages, because the conventions of those days forbade it.

Now, since we cannot hope to reëstablish those conventions, youth must be educated to the newer conventions, and restrained accordingly, not by force, but by the only logical course, reasoning.

The letter in the department signed Happy's Wife is certainly good to read. A letter like hers should lend courage to the most pessimistic. The woman's happiness is most certainly supreme, and only a woman like her can hope to perpetuate a nation that will stand foremost among the nations of the world.

With the best of wishes for your continued success, and also that of the Friend in Need department. W. C. R.

Peggy Advises

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I have wanted to enter your corner for some time, but have always hesitated lest I be one too many. Now that I have read Crystal's letter I have made up my mind to beg for a space.

My dear Crystal, you ask "What is love?" Have you not confessed your love for that

hound who jilted you? I think that you will have to say the same that I do—love cannot be explained. Webster says "strong attachment, devotion to another, tenderness, kind feeling." But I do not believe that even all these can explain love.

Now for question number two: Did you ever try being wife to a man you did not love? I have, and I was most unhappy. He was a good man when I married him, always had been before; but what a change when such a woman as the one of whom you speak came along! I respected him when I married him. I had always known him and just simply drifted into marriage. I shall always feel that if he had been more wild, had met more types of women before, he would probably have been kinder to me and would have been ready to settle down and make a real home.

If I marry again, I will marry a man who has mingled with all classes, even if he is not so good.

Dismiss the idea that it does not pay to be good. It surely does. A man always appreciates a good girl, no matter whether he is good or bad. But I believe the bad man appreciates a good girl more than the so-called good man does, for he knows just how hard it is to find a good girl. Cheer up, dear, for one of these days Mr. Right Man will come along, and your love will only be stronger because of your suffering. Mine is, now that Mr. Right Man is here. PEGGY.

A Word for Hoodooed.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN: I read the letter from "Hoodooed." I truly pity any one who has to stand such abuse from a man. The letters of almost all who were married very young are full of sadness, I have noticed. I am going to write you one that is different. I married when I was seventeen, my husband nineteen. Just think of it—two kids who knew nothing of the responsibility or the hardships or sacrifices of married life! We were in love—and I mean just that—therefore we got married. We have been married ten years and we have a little girl who will soon be nine.

Of course we have little squabbles, but they don't amount to a row of beans. We have had many bits of hard luck, sickness and all; but we stuck it out hand in hand.

We are still very much in love and are happy. We have a cute home, and love and enjoy it very much.

You know, they say men are just boys grown big. I treat my husband as if he were a boy. I scold him when he is naughty, love him all the time, and sometimes I am foolish enough to talk baby talk to him. He is just a regular boy.

SWEETHEART.

I wonder if there isn't more in your theory than most of us realize. These letters from happy wives are mighty welcome.

LOVE STORY'S OWN CORNER

One of our readers, an executive in a Detroit, Michigan, real-estate firm, who wishes to be known only as J. D. C., insinuates that men, particularly those who weigh "upward of two hundred pounds," are little interested in romance.

I suppose J. D. C. is going on the theory that nobody loves a fat man. Let us hasten to correct his impression!

After taking another glance at the name of your magazine, I am somewhat reluctant about writing you, owing to the fact that I am of the masculine breed and weigh upward of two hundred pounds.

My stenographer left a copy of your magazine on the table in my outer office and while waiting to keep a Sunday appointment, I picked it up and read a story called "The Wealth He Sought," by a Mary Frances Doner.

This lady—assuming that I am correct, and knowing full well that writers sometimes publish their stories under a nom de plume—created a real Irishman in "Terry Shayne." I am of the tribe of St. Patrick, and have a close relative the "dead spit" of Miss Doner's Terry. Is this writer a regular contributor to your magazine, and are there any more of her stories to be published in your magazine in the near future?

I have commissioned my office girl to purchase your magazine, and to notify me when she finds a story therein written by Miss Doner.

We forgive you, J. D. C.! Neither your weight nor your breed need prevent you from being human! You are a gentleman of keen perception, your assumption concerning Miss Doner is correct.

We are going to have more of her stories and more real Irishmen in LOVE STORY MAGAZINE because we rather like them ourselves!

From Mrs. George Jackson, of Fairfield, Neb., comes a letter of the sort which warms our heart:

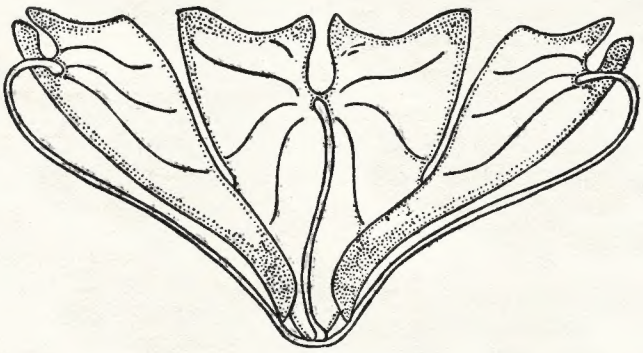
I anxiously waited the second installment of "The Witch's Daughter." I am hopelessly in love with your wonderful magazine. I liked "The Lady of the Towers" very much. Wish the author would give us some more stories with a foreign setting. Also liked "The Abbey Ball" and "Love's Lottery." "Something to Love" was a touching story and well handled. Long live the LOVE STORY.

And we have more stories with foreign settings for you, Mrs. Jackson! I'm sure you'll like "The Prayer of Carlotta's Heart." "Love and the Law," by Rhea Jewett, will interest you, too.

Thanks for your kind wishes.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to answer, either in these pages, or by personal letter, problems on which you desire her advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures on those you permit us to print will be withheld. Inclose stamped and addressed envelope when personal reply is requested.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



"A blatant and cynical immorality is raising its head among us, and it must be conquered by that grave respect for the sanctity of the home, the inviolability of the marriage tie. We must drive home to all America that the honor of the individual is the honor of the family, and the honor of the family is the honor of the State. We must sanctify our family life, for no nation can long endure which is based on a foundation of broken families."

From a speech by HON. JAMES J. DAVIS
Secretary of Labor

Nowhere is there such abundant evidence of the verity of Secretary Davis' contention that there is a trend toward blatant and cynical immorality, as in the reading matter that is so much in evidence upon the news stands these days. There are a huge number of tainted publications.

There is one magazine, however, which is free of any such taint, and has been free ever since its inception. It is a magazine for the home, a magazine which may be placed safely in the hands of any reader, a magazine which brings joy, satisfaction, entertainment, and relaxation to every one of its readers, at the same time giving sound, wholesome advice and guidance for living a clean, wholesome life.

The name of this publication is LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. Ask your dealer to show you a copy. You will find that it is all that we claim it to be.

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